# CHATTERTON

# A BIOGRAPHY

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# CHATTERTON

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## A BIOGRAPHY

BY

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IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

*NEW AND REVISED EDITION*

LONDON

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

27 PATERNOSTER ROW

1899

Edinburgh: T. and A. Constable, Printers to Her Majesty

College
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3343
M38
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# PREFATORY NOTE

THIS Biography, published originally in 1856 as part of a volume of Collected Essays, and subsequently in similar companionship, is now re-issued by itself, after having been for a considerable time out of print. There has been some revision throughout, and the concluding chapter has been much enlarged.

EDINBURGH:
*November* 1899.

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# PART I
# BRISTOL

# CHAPTER I

## WILKES AND LIBERTY

WAS there ever a time that did not think highly of its own importance? Was there ever a time when the world did not believe itself to be going to pieces, and when alarming pamphlets on 'the present crisis' did not lie unbought on the counters of the booksellers? Poor mortals that we are, how we do make the most of our own little portion in the general drama of history! Nor are we quite wrong, after all. There is nothing really to laugh at in our laborious anxieties about this same 'present crisis,' which is always happening, and never over. 'We live in earnest times': what is there in the incessant repetition of this stereotyped phrase but an explicit assertion by each generation for itself that the great sense of life, transmitted already through so many generations, is now, in turn, passing through *it*? The time when we ourselves are alive, the time when our eyes behold the light, and when the breath is strong in our nostrils, that is the crisis for us; and,

although it belongs to a higher than we to determine the worth of what we do, yet that we should do everything with a certain amount of vehemence and bustle seems but the necessary noise of the shuttle as we weave forth our allotted portion of the general web of existence.

Well, many years ago, there was a 'crisis' in England. It was the time, reader, when our great-great-grandfathers, intent on bringing about your existence and mine, were, for that purpose, paying court to our reluctant great-great-grandmothers. George III., an obese young sovereign of thirty-three, had been then ten years on the throne. Newspapers were not so numerous as now; Parliament was not open to reporters; and, had gentlemen of the Liberal press been alive, with their present political opinions, every soul of them would have been hanged. Nevertheless, people got on very well; and there was enough for a nation of seven millions to take interest in and talk about when they were in an inquisitive humour. Lord North, an ungainly country gentleman, with goggle eyes and big cheeks, had just succeeded the Duke of Grafton as the head of a Tory ministry; Lord Chatham, throwing off his gout for the occasion, had, at the age of sixty-two, resumed his place as the thundering Jove of the

Opposition; Bute and other Scotsmen were still said to be sucking the blood of the nation; and Edmund Burke, then in the prime of his strength and intellect, was publishing masterly pamphlets, and trying to construct, under the auspices of the Marquis of Rockingham, a new Whig party. Among the notabilities out of Parliament were Dr. Samuel Johnson, then past his sixty-first year, and a most obstinate old Tory, his friend Sir Joshua Reynolds, fourteen years younger, Goldy, several years younger still, and Garrick, fifty-four years of age, but as sprightly as ever. In another circle, but not less prominently before the town, were Parson Horne and Mrs. Macaulay; and all England was ringing with the terrible letters of the invisible Junius. But the man of the hour, the hero of the self-dubbed crisis, was John Wilkes.

Arrested in 1763, on account of the publication of No. 45 of the *North Briton*, in which one of the King's speeches had been severely commented on; discharged a few days afterwards in consequence of his privilege as a Member of Parliament; lifted instantaneously by this accident into an unexampled blaze of popular favour; persecuted all the more on this account by the Court party; at last, in January 1764, expelled from his seat in the House of

Commons by a vote declaring him to be a seditious libeller; put on his trial thereafter before the court of Queen's Bench, and escaping sentence only by a voluntary flight to France: this squint-eyed personage, known up to that time only as a profligate wit about town, who lived on his wife's money and fascinated other women in spite of his ugliness, had now been for six years the idol and glory of England. For six years 'Wilkes and Forty-five' had been chalked on the walls, 'Wilkes and Liberty' had been the cry of the mobs, and portraits of Wilkes had hung in the windows of the print-shops. Remembering that he was the champion of liberal opinions, even pious Dissenters had forgotten his atheism and his profligacy. They distinguished, they said, between the man himself and the cause which he represented.

For a year or two the patriot had been content with the mere echo of this applause as it was wafted to him in Paris. But, cash failing him there, and the Parliament from which he had been ejected having been dissolved, he had returned to England early in 1768, had offered himself as a candidate for the City of London, had lost that election, but had almost instantly afterwards been returned for the County of Middlesex. Hereupon he had ventured to surrender

himself to the process of the law; and the result had been his condemnation, in June 1768, to pay a fine of £1000, and undergo an imprisonment of twenty-two months. Nor had this been all. No sooner had Parliament met than it had proceeded to expel the member for Middlesex. Then had begun the tug of war between Parliament and the People. Thirteen days after his expulsion, the exasperated electors of Middlesex had again returned Wilkes as their representative, no one having dared to oppose him. Again the House had expelled him, and again the electors had returned him. Not till after the fourth farce of election had the contest ceased. On that occasion three other candidates had presented themselves; and one of them, Colonel Luttrell, having polled 296 votes, had been declared by the House to be duly elected, notwithstanding that the votes for Wilkes had been four times as numerous. Tremendous, then, had been the outcry of popular indignation. During the whole of the years 1768 and 1769 'the violation of the right of election by parliamentary despotism' had been the great topic of the country; and in the beginning of 1770 this was still the question of the hour, the question forced by the people into all other discussions, and regarding which all candidates for popular favour, from Chatham himself down to the

parish beadle, were obliged distinctly to declare themselves.

Meanwhile Wilkes was in the King's Bench, Southwark. His consolations, we may suppose, were that by all this his popularity had been but increased, that Parson Horne and the Society for the Protection of the Bill of Rights had organised a subscription in his favour which would more than pay his fine, and that the whole country was waiting to do him honour on the day when he should step out of prison.

It came at last: Tuesday, the 17th of April 1770. There was a considerable show of excitement all day in the vicinity of the prison; and it was with some difficulty that the patriot, getting into a hackney-coach late in the afternoon, made his way, past the cordial clutches of the mob, into the country. That evening and the next there were huzzas and illuminations in his honour; the house of Beckford, the Lord Mayor, in the then aristocratic region of Soho Square, was conspicuously decorated with the word 'Liberty'; and public dinners to celebrate the release of the patriot were held in various parts of the City.

The rejoicings were not confined to London. In many other towns in England there were demonstra-

tions in honour of Wilkes. A list of the chief places may still be culled from the newspapers of the day. From those newspapers we learn, what indeed might have been independently surmised, that not the least eager among the towns of England in this emulous show of regard for Wilkes was the ancient mercantile city of Bristol. The following appeared in the *Public Advertiser* of London, as from a Bristol correspondent, on the very day of Wilkes's release:

'*Bristol, April 14th.*—We hear that on Wednesday next, being the day of Mr. Wilkes's enlargement, forty-five persons are to dine at the "Crown," in the passage leading from Broad Street to Tower Lane. The entertainment is to consist of two rounds of beef, of 45 lbs. each; two legs of veal, weighing 45 lbs.; two ditto of pork, 45 lbs.; a pig, roasted, 45 lbs.; two puddings of 45 lbs.; 45 loaves; and, to drink, 45 tankards of ale. After dinner, they are to smoke 45 pipes of tobacco, and to drink 45 bowls of punch. Among others, the following toasts are to be given:—1. Long live the King; 2. Long live the supporters of British Liberty; 3. The Magistrates of Bristol. And the dinner to be on the table exactly 45 minutes after two o'clock.'

Whether the precise dinner thus announced by the Bristol correspondent of the *Public Advertiser* was held or not must, we fear, remain a mystery; but that there were several dinners in Bristol on the occasion is quite certain. On Thursday, the 19th, in particular, a public entertainment (possibly

the above, with the day altered) was given in honour of the patriot by 'an eminent citizen,' and attended by many of the most influential men in the place.

Ah! the poetry of coincidences! On that same Thursday evening, while the assembled guests in the 'Crown' were clattering their glasses in the hot room, puffing their tobacco-smoke, and making the roof ring with their tipsy uproar, there was walking moodily through the streets of Bristol a young attorney's apprentice, who, four days before, had been discharged from his employment because he had alarmed his master by threatening to commit suicide. This attorney's apprentice was Thomas Chatterton.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ATTORNEY'S APPRENTICE OF BRISTOL

It was in the month of August 1760 that a poor widow, who supported herself and two children by dressmaking, and by keeping a small day-school in one of the back streets of Bristol, gained admission for her younger child, a boy of seven years and nine months old, into Colston's School, a charitable foundation similar in some respects to Christ's Hospital in London. The husband of this widow, a rough, drunken fellow, who had been a singer or sub-chanter in the cathedral choir of Bristol, as well as the master of a kind of free school for boys, had died a month or two before his son's birth. An old grandmother, however—either the widow's own mother or her husband's—was still alive, dependent, in some degree, on the family.

For nearly seven years, or from August 1760 to July 1767, the boy remained an inmate of Colston's School, wearing, as the Christ's Hospital boys in London did, a blue coat and yellow stockings,

and receiving, according to the custom of the institution, such a plain education as might fit him for an ordinary mercantile or mechanical occupation. But from the very first the boy was singular. For one thing, he was a prodigious reader. The Bible, theological treatises, scraps of history, old magazines, poetry, whatever in the shape of a printed volume came in his way—all were eagerly pounced upon and devoured; and it was not long before his reputation in this respect enabled him to lay one or two circulating libraries under friendly contribution. Then, again, his temper, people remarked, had something in it quite unusual in one so young. Generally very sullen and silent, he was liable to sudden and unaccountable fits of weeping, as well as to violent fits of rage. He was also extremely secretive, and fond of being alone; and on Saturday and other holiday afternoons, when he was at liberty to go home from school, it was a subject of speculation with his mother, Mrs. Chatterton, and her acquaintances, what the boy could be doing, sitting alone for hours, as was his habit, in a garret full of all kinds of out-of-the-way lumber.

When he was about ten years of age, it became known to some of his seniors that the little Bluecoat was in the habit of writing verses. It is supposed

that a taste for that exercise had been roused in him, as well as in other boys in Colston's School, by the usher or under-master of the school, a Mr. Thomas Phillips, who himself dabbled in literature, and contributed to periodicals. If so, however, the little pupil does not seem to have taken even the usher into his confidence originally, but to have proceeded on his own account. His first known attempt in verse had been a pious little achievement, entitled 'On the Last Epiphany; or, Christ's coming to Judgment'; and so proud had he been of this performance, and so ambitious of seeing it in print, that he boldly dropped it, one Saturday afternoon, into the letter-box of *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, a weekly newspaper in high local repute. It appeared in the columns of that newspaper on the 8th of January 1763. From that day Chatterton was a sworn poet. Piece after piece was dropped by him during a period of three years into the letter-box of the accommodating *Journal*. Only one of these, however, is it necessary to mention particularly—a little lampoon, printed on the 7th of January 1764, and entitled 'The Churchwarden and the Apparition; a Fable.' A Mr. Joseph Thomas, a brickmaker by trade, chancing in that year to hold the office of churchwarden for the parish of St. Mary Redcliffe,

had greatly scandalised the public mind by causing the old churchyard to be levelled, and the surplus earth and clay to be carted away, as people said, for his own professional uses. For this outrage on decorum he was much attacked by the local press, and nowhere more severely than in the above-mentioned verses of the little Bluecoat; in whom, by the bye, there must have been a kind of hereditary resentment of such a piece of sacrilege, as his ancestors, the Chattertons, had been sextons of the church of St. Mary Redcliffe for a period of one hundred and fifty years continuously. The office had, in fact, only passed out of the family on the death of an older brother of his father, named John Chatterton.

The date does not seem quite certain, but it was probably nearly three years after this occurrence, and when Chatterton was above fourteen years of age, and one of the senior boys in the Bluecoat School, that he stepped, one afternoon, into the shop of a Mr. Burgum, partner of a Mr. Catcott in the pewter trade.

'I have found out a secret about you, Mr. Burgum,' he said, going up to the pewterer at his desk.

'Indeed: what is it?' said Mr. Burgum.

'That you are descended from one of the noblest families in England.'

'I did not know it,' said the victim.

'It is true, though,' said Chatterton; 'and, to prove it, I will bring you your pedigree written out, as I have traced it by the help of books of the peerage and old parchments.'

Accordingly, a few days afterwards, he again called, and presented the astonished pewterer with a manuscript copybook, headed in large text as follows: 'Account of the Family of the De Berghams, from the Norman Conquest to this Time; collected from original Records, Tournament Rolls, and the Heralds of March and Garter Records, by T. Chatterton.' In this document the Burgum pedigree was elaborately traced up, through no end of great names and illustrious intermarriages, to one 'Simon de Seyncte Lyze, *alias* Senliz,' who had come into England with the Conqueror, married a daughter of the Saxon chief Waltheof, become possessed of Burgham Castle in Northumberland and other properties, and been eventually created Earl of Northampton.

Pleased with the honours thus unexpectedly thrust upon him, the pewterer gave the Bluecoat five shillings for his trouble. To show his gratitude,

Chatterton soon returned with 'A Continuation of the Account of the Family of the De Berghams from the Norman Conquest to this time.' In the original pedigree the young genealogist had judiciously stopped short at the sixteenth century. In the supplement, however, he ventures as far down as the reign of Charles II., back to which point the pewterer is left to supply the links for himself. But the chief feature in the pedigree, as elaborated in the second document, is that, in addition to other great names, it contains a poet. This poet, whose name was John de Bergham, was a monk of the Cistercian order in Bristol; he had been educated at Oxford; and he was 'one of the greatest ornaments of the age in which he lived.' He wrote several books, and translated some part of the *Iliad*, under the title of 'Romance of Troy.' To give Mr. Burgum some idea of the poetic style of this distinguished man, his ancestor, there was inserted a short poem of his in the ancient dialect, entitled 'The Romaunte of the Cnychte'; and, to render the meaning of the poem more intelligible, there was appended a modern metrical paraphrase of it by Chatterton himself.

By the *éclat* of this wonderful piece of genealogical and heraldic ingenuity done for Mr. Burgum, as well as by the occasional exercise in a more or

less public manner of his talent for verse-making, Chatterton, already recognised as the first for attainments among all the lads in Colston's School, appears to have won a kind of reputation with a few persons of the pewterer's stamp out of doors—honest people, with small pretensions to literature themselves, but willing to encourage a clever boy whose mother was in poor circumstances.

It was probably through the influence of such persons that, after having been seven years at the school, he was removed from it, in July 1767, to be apprenticed to Mr. John Lambert, a Bristol attorney. The trustees of Colston's School paid to Lambert, on the occasion, a premium of ten pounds; and the arrangement was that Chatterton should be bound to him for seven years, during which period he was to board and lodge in Mr. Lambert's house, his mother undertaking to wash and mend for him. There was no salary; but, as happens in such cases, there were probably means in Bristol by which a lad writing a neat clerk's hand, as Chatterton did, could hope to earn now and then a few stray shillings. At any rate, he had the prospect of finding himself, at the end of seven years, in a fair way to be a Bristol attorney.

Lambert's office-hours were from eight in the

morning till eight in the evening, with an interval for dinner. From eight till ten in the evening the apprentice was at liberty; but he was required to be home at his master's house, which was at some distance from the office, punctually by ten. An indignity which he felt very much, and more than once complained of, was that by the household arrangements, which were under the control of an old lady, his master's mother, he was sent to take his meals in the kitchen, and made to sleep with the footboy. To set against this, however, there was the advantage of plenty of spare time; for, as Lambert's business was not very extensive, the apprentice was often left alone in the office with nothing special to do, and at liberty to amuse himself as he liked. From copying letters and precedents, he could turn to *Camden's Britannia*, an edition of which lay on the office-shelves, to *Holinshed's Chronicles*, to *Speght's Chaucer*, to *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, or to any other book that he could borrow from a library and smuggle in for his private recreation. Sometimes also, the tradition goes, his master, entering the office unexpectedly, would catch him writing verses, and would lecture him on the subject. Once the offence was still more serious. An anonymous abusive letter had been sent to Mr. Warner, the head-master

of Colston's School; and, by the texture of the paper and other evidences, this letter was traced to the ex-Bluecoat of Mr. Lambert's office, whose reasons for sending it had probably been personal. On this occasion his master was so exasperated as to strike him.

A young attorney's apprentice, of proud and sullen temper, discontented with his situation, ambitious, conscious of genius, yet treated as a boy and menial servant: such was Chatterton during the two years that followed his removal from the Bluecoat School. To this add the want of pocket-money; for, busy as he was with his master's work and his own secret exercises in the way of literature, it is still authentically known that he found time of an evening not only to drop in pretty regularly at his mother's house, but also to do as other attorneys' apprentices did, and prosecute such little amusements as all apprentices like to find practicable. Altogether, the best glimpse we have of Chatterton in his commoner aspect as an attorney's apprentice in Bristol is that which we get from a letter written by him, during his first year with Mr. Lambert, to a youth named Baker, who had been his chum at Colston's School, and had emigrated to America. Baker had written to him from South Carolina, informing him, amongst other

things, that he had fallen in love with an American belle, of the name of Hoyland, whose charms had obscured his memory of the Bristol fair ones, and begging him, it would also appear, to woo the Muses in his favour, and transmit him across the Atlantic a poem or two, to be presented to Miss Hoyland. Chatterton complies, and sends a long letter, beginning with a few amatory effusions to Miss Hoyland, such as Baker wanted, and concluding thus—

'*March 6th*, 1768

'DEAR FRIEND,—I must now close my poetical labours, my master being returned from London. You write in a very entertaining style; though I am afraid mine will be to the contrary. Your celebrated Miss Rumsey is going to be married to Mr. Fowler, as he himself informs me. Pretty children! about to enter into the comfortable yoke of matrimony, to be at their liberty; just *apropos* to the old saw, "But out of the frying-pan into the fire." For a lover, heavens mend him! but for a husband, oh, excellent! What a female Machiavel this Miss Rumsey is! A very good mistress of nature, to discover a *demon* in the habit of a parson; to find a spirit so well adapted to the humour of an English wife; that is, one who takes off his hat to every person he chances to meet, to show his staring horns! . . . *O mirabile*, what will human nature degenerate into? Fowler aforesaid declares he makes a scruple of conscience of being too free with Miss Rumsey before marriage. There's a gallant for you! Why, a girl with anything of the woman would despise him for it. But no more of this. I am glad you approve of the ladies in Charlestown, and am obliged to you for the compliment of including me in your happiness.

My friendship is as firm as the white rock when the black waves war around it and the waters burst on its hoary top; when the driving wind ploughs the sable sea, and the rising waves aspire to the clouds, turning with the rattling hail. So much for heroics; to speak plain English, I am, and ever will be, your unalterable friend. I did not give your love to Miss Rumsey, having not seen her in private; and in public she will not speak to me, because of her great love to Fowler, and on another occasion. I have been violently in love these three-and-twenty times since your departure, and not a few times came off victorious. I am obliged to you for your curiosity, and shall esteem it very much, not on account of itself, but as coming from you. The poems, etc., on Miss Hoyland, I wish better, for her sake and yours. The *Tournament* I have only one canto of, which I send herewith; the remainder is entirely lost. I am, with the greatest regret, going to subscribe myself your faithful and constant friend till death do us part.

'THOMAS CHATTERTON.

*To* MR. BAKER, *Charlestown, South Carolina.*'

When Chatterton wrote this letter he was fifteen years and four months old. To its tone as illustrative of certain parts of his character we shall have yet to refer; meanwhile let us attend to the mention made in it of the *Tournament*, one canto of which is said to be sent along with it. The poem here meant is doubtless the antique dramatic fragment published among Chatterton's writings in the assumed guise of an original poem of the fifteenth century, descriptive of a tournament held at Bristol in the reign of

Edward I. From the manner of the allusion it is clear that as early as this period of Chatterton's life—that is, before the close of the first year of his apprenticeship—he was in the habit of showing about to some of his private friends poems in an antique style, which he represented as genuine antiques copied from old parchments in his possession. It was not, however, till about six months after the date of the foregoing epistle that he made his *début*, in the professed character of an antiquarian and proprietor of ancient manuscripts, before the good folks of Bristol generally.

In September 1768 a new bridge was opened at Bristol with much civic pomp and ceremony. While the excitement was still fresh, the antiquaries of the town were startled by the appearance in *Felix Farley's Journal* of a very interesting account of the ceremonies that had attended the similar opening, several centuries before, of the old bridge which had just been superseded. This account, communicated by an anonymous correspondent signing himself 'Dunhelmus Bristoliensis,' purported to be taken from an old manuscript contemporary with the occurrence. It described how the opening of the old bridge had taken place on a 'Fridaie'; how, on that 'Fridaie,' the ceremonies had been begun

by one 'Master Greggorie Dalbenye,' who went 'aboute the tollynge of the tenth clock' to inform Master Mayor 'all thyngs were prepared'; how the procession to the bridge had consisted, first, of 'two Beadils streying fresh stre,' then of a man dressed as 'a Saxon Elderman,' then of 'a mickle strong manne in armour carrying a huge anlace [*i.e.* sword],' then of 'six claryons and minstrels,' then of 'Master Mayor' on a white horse, then of 'the Eldermen and Cittie Brothers' on sable horses, and, finally, of 'the preests, parish, mendicant, and seculor, some synging Saincte Warburgh's song, others sounding claryons thereto, and others some citrialles'; how, when the procession had reached the bridge, the 'manne with the anlace' took his station on a mound reared in the middle of it; how the rest gathered round him, 'the preests and freers, all in white albs, making a most goodlie shewe,' and singing 'the song of Saincte Baldwyn'; how, when this was done, 'the manne on the top threwe with greet myght his anlace into the see, and the claryons sounded an auntiant charge and forloyn'; how then there was more singing, and at the town-cross a Latin sermon 'preeched by Ralph de Blundeville'; and how the day was ended by festivities, the performance of the play of 'The Knyghtes of Bristowe'

by the friars of St. Augustine, and the lighting of a great bonfire on Kynwulph Hill.

The antiquaries of the town were eager to know the anonymous 'Dunhelmus Bristoliensis' who had contributed this perfectly novel document to the archives of Bristol; and they succeeded in identifying him with Mr. Lambert's singular apprentice—the discoverer, as they would now learn, of a similar piece of antiquity in the shape of a pedigree for Mr. Burgum, the pewterer. Examined, coaxed, and threatened, on the subject of his authority, Chatterton prevaricated, but at last adhered to the assertion that the manuscript in question was one of a collection which had belonged to his father, who had obtained them from the large chest or coffer in the muniment-room of the church of St. Mary Redcliffe. And here, whether owing to his obstinacy or to the stupidity of the inquisitors, the matter was allowed to rest.

The general impression that followed the discovery of the author of the communication relative to the opening of the old bridge was that Mr. Lambert's apprentice was really a very extraordinary lad, who, besides being a poet in a small way, was a dabbler in antiquities, and had somehow or other become possessed, as he said himself, of

valuable materials respecting the history of Bristol. Accordingly he became, in some sense, a local celebrity. Among the persons who now took him by the hand, if they had not been already acquainted with him, at least three were of some name and importance in Bristol: Mr. George Catcott, the partner of Mr. Burgum; his brother, the Rev. Alexander Catcott, vicar of one of the Bristol parish-churches; and Mr. Barrett, a surgeon in good practice. Two of these had a reputation for literary ability. Mr. William Barrett, the surgeon, was not only a sedate and prosperous professional man, but also a zealous antiquarian, and was known to be engaged in writing a History of Bristol. The Rev. Mr. Catcott had written a book in support of the Noachian view of the Deluge, and was therefore, according to Chatterton's delineations of him, a kind of oracle on scientific subjects at Bristol tea-parties, where, 'shewing wondering cits his fossil store,' he would expound his orthodox theory of springs, rocks, mountains, and strata. What the clerical Catcott was at refined tea-parties his coarser brother, the pewterer, was at taverns. Chatterton thus hits him off—

> 'So at Llewellyn's your great brother sits,
> The laughter of his tributary wits,

> Ruling the noisy multitude with ease,—
> Empties his pint, and sputters his decrees.'

Besides the two Catcotts, Barrett, and Burgum (with whom is associated, in a vague way, the Rev. Mr. Broughton, vicar of St. Mary Redcliffe), the following are more or less heard of as among the acquaintances of Chatterton in Bristol during his apprenticeship in Mr. Lambert's office: Mr. Thomas Phillips, the usher or under-master of Colston's School, already mentioned; Mr. Matthew Mease, a vintner; Messrs. Allen and Broderip, two musicians and church-organists of the town; Mr. Clayfield, a distiller, 'a worthy, generous man'; Mr. Alcock, a miniature-painter; T. Cary, a pipe-maker; H. Kator, a sugar-baker; William Smith, a player; J. Rudhall, an apothecary's apprentice; and James Thistlethwaite, who had been a Colston's charity-boy with Chatterton, and had been apprenticed to a Bristol stationer. There are references also to some acquaintances of the other sex: Mrs. Baker, Mrs. Carty, Miss Webb, Miss Sandford, Miss Bush, Miss Thatcher, Miss Hill, and others; the most conspicuous of all, and the only one between whom and Chatterton one is able to surmise a sentimental relation, being that 'female Machiavel, Miss Rumsey,' so spitefully described in the letter to the trans-

atlantic Mr. Baker. On the whole, however, the Catcotts, Barrett, and Burgum, come most into notice. On the Rev. Mr. Catcott, Chatterton, we are to suppose, drops in occasionally, to listen to a prelection on fossils and the Deluge; Burgum and the other Catcott he may sometimes meet at Matthew Mease's, where Catcott acts the chairman; and from Barrett, on whom he calls at his surgery once a week or so, he receives sensible advices as to the propriety of making poetry subordinate to his profession, as well as (what he greatly prefers) the loan of medical and uncommon books.

It was amid this little public of heterogeneous individuals—clergyman, surgeons, tradesmen, vintners, and young apprentices like himself—that Chatterton produced his Rowley Poems and other antique writings. As early as the date of the Burgum pedigree, we have seen, he had ventured to bring out one antique piece, the *Romaunte of the Cnychte* by the so-called John de Bergham. To this had been added, as early as the commencement of 1768, the *Tournament*, mentioned in the letter to Baker, and perhaps other pieces. Farther, in the account of the opening of the old bridge (September 1768), references are introduced to the 'Songe of Saincte Warburgh,' and the 'Songe of Saincte

Baldwyn,' showing that those antiques must have been then extant. In short, there is evidence that, before the conclusion of his sixteenth year, Chatterton had produced at least a portion of his alleged antiques. But the year that followed, or from the close of 1768 to the close of 1769, seems to have been his most prolific period in this respect. In or about the winter of 1768-9—that is, when he had just completed his sixteenth year—he produced, in the circle of his friends above mentioned, his ballad of *The Bristowe Tragedie*, his 'tragical interlude' of *Ælla*, in itself a large poem, his *Elinoure and Juga*, a fine pastoral poem of the Wars of the Roses, and numerous other pieces of all forms and lengths in the same antique spelling. Then also did he first distinctly give the account of those pieces to which he ever afterwards adhered: to wit, that they were, for the greater part, the compositions of Thomas Rowley, a priest of Bristol of the fifteenth century, many of whose manuscripts, preserved in the muniment-room of the church of St. Mary, had come into his hands.

The Catcotts were the persons most interested in the recovered manuscripts; and, whenever Chatterton had a new poem of Rowley's on his hands, it was usually to Mr. George Catcott that he first gave a

copy of it. To Mr. Barrett, on the other hand, he usually imparted such scraps of ancient records, deeds, accounts of old churches, etc., as were likely to be of use to that gentleman in preparing his History of Bristol. So extensive, in fact, were the surgeon's obligations to the young man that he seems to have thought it impossible to requite them otherwise than by a pecuniary recompense. Accordingly, there is evidence of an occasional guinea or half-guinea having been transferred from the pocket of Mr. Barrett to that of Chatterton on the score of literary assistance rendered to Barrett in the progress of his work. From the Catcotts, too, Chatterton seems, on similar grounds, to have now and then obtained something. That they were not so liberal as they might have been, however, the following bill in Chatterton's handwriting will show—

'Mr. G. CATCOTT

*To the* Executors of T. ROWLEY.

| | |
|---|---|
| To pleasure recd. in readg. his Historic works. . | £5 5 0 |
| ,, ,, ,, his Poetic works . . | £5 5 0 |
| | £10 10 0' |

Whether the bill was splenetically sent to Catcott, or whether it was only drawn up by Chatterton in a cashless moment by way of frolic, is not certain; the probability, however, is that, if it was sent, the

pewterer did not think it necessary to discharge it. Yet he was not such a hard subject as his partner Burgum, whom Chatterton (no doubt after sufficient trial) represents as stinginess itself.

But it was not only as a young man of extensive antiquarian knowledge and of decided literary talent that Chatterton was known in Bristol. As the transcriber of the Rowley Poems, and the editor of curious pieces of information, derived from ancient manuscripts which he was understood to have in his possession, the Catcotts, Barrett, and the rest had no fault to find with him; but there were other phases in which he appeared, and which were not so likely to recommend him to their favour, or to the favour of such other influential persons in the community as might have been disposed to patronise youthful ability.

In a town of 70,000 inhabitants (which was about the population of Bristol at that time) it must be remembered that all the public characters are marked men. The mayor, the various aldermen and common councilmen, the city clergymen, the chief grocers, bankers and tradesmen, the teachers of the public schools, etc., are all recognised as they pass along the streets; and their peculiarities, physical and moral—the red nose of Alderman Such-an-one,

the wheezy voice of the Rev. Such-another, and the blustering self-importance of citizen Such-a-third, —are perfectly familiar to the civic imagination. Now, it is the most natural of all things for a young man in such a town, just arrived at a tolerable conceit of himself, and determined to have a place some day in Mr. Craik's 'Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties,' to be seized with a tremendous disrespect for everything locally sacred, and to delight in avowing the same. What nonsense they do talk in the town-council! what a miserable set of mercantile rogues are the wealthy citizens! what an absence of liberality and high general intelligence there is in the whole procedure of the community! these are the common-places (often, it must be confessed, true enough) through which the high-spirited young native of a middle-class British town must almost necessarily pass, on his way to a higher appreciation of men and things. Through the sorrows of Lichfield, the Lichfield youth realises how it is that all creation groaneth and travaileth; and, pinched by the inconveniences of any other town, the aspirant who is there nursed into manhood begins to snarl at things generally and to take a Byronic view of the entire universe.

Chatterton was specially liable to this discontent

with all around him. Of a dogged, sullen and passionate disposition, not without a considerable spice of malice ; treated as a boy, yet with a brain believing itself the most powerful in Bristol ; sadly in want of pocket-money for purposes more or less questionable, and having hardly any means of procuring it—he took his revenge out in satire against all that was respectable in Bristol. If Mr. Thomas Harris, then the Right Worshipful Mayor of the city, passed him on the pavement, either ignorant what a youth of genius he was pushing aside, or looking down somewhat askance, as a mayor will do at an attorney's apprentice that will not take off his hat at the proper moment, the thought that probably rose in his breast was, 'You are a purse-proud fool, Mr. Mayor, and I have more sense in my little finger than you have in your whole body.' If there was a civic dinner, and Chatterton was told of it, he would remark what feeding there would be among the aldermen and city brothers, what guzzling of claret, and what after-dinner speeches by fellows that could not pronounce their h's and hardly knew how to read. If he chanced to sit in church, hearing the Rev. Dr. Cutts Barton, then Dean of Bristol, preach, what would pass in his mind would be, 'You are a drowsy old rogue, Cutts, and have no more religion

in you than a sausage.' Even when Dr. Newton, the Bishop of the diocese, editor of Milton and distinguished prelate as he was, made his appearance in the pulpit, he would not be safe from the excoriations of this young critic in the distant pew. Chatterton's own friends and acquaintances, too, came in for their share of his sarcasms. Lambert, we believe, he hated; and we have seen how he could wreak a personal grudge on an old teacher. The Rev. Mr. Catcott, not a bad fellow in the main, he soon set down, in his own private opinion, as a narrow-minded parson, with no force or philosophy, conceited with his reputation at tea-parties, and a dreadful bore with his fossils and his theory of the Deluge. His brother, the unclerical Catcott, again, had probably more wit and vigour, but dogmatised insufferably over his beer; Burgum was a vain, stingy, ungrammatical goose; and Mr. Barrett, with all his good intentions, was too fond of giving common-place advices. In short, Bristol was a vile place, where originality or genius, or even ordinary culture and intelligence, had no chance of being appreciated; and to spend one's existence there would be but a life-long attempt to teach a certain class of animals the value and the beauty of pearls!

Poor unhappy youth! how, through the mist and din of many years past and gone since then, I seem to see thee walking, in the winter evenings of 1769-70, through the dark streets of Bristol, or out into its dark environs, ruminating such evil thoughts as these! And what, constituting myself for the moment the mouthpiece of all that society has since pronounced on thy case, should I, leaping back over the long years to place myself by thy side, whisper to thee by way of counsel or reproach?—

'Persist; be content; be more modest; think less of forbidden indulgences; give up telling lies; attend to your master's business; and, if you *will* cherish the fire of genius, and become a poet and a man of name, like the Johnsons, the Goldsmiths, the Churchills, and others whom you think yourself born to equal or surpass, at least study patience, have faith in honourable courses, and realise, above all, that wealth and fame are vanity, and that whether you succeed or fail it will be all the same a hundred years after this.'

'Easily said,' thou wouldst answer; 'cheaply advised! I also could speak as you do; if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you. That the present will pass, and that a hundred years

hence all the tragedy or all the farce will have been done and over—true; I know it. Nevertheless I know also that, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, the present must be moved through and exhausted! "A hundred years after this!" Did not Manlius the Roman know it; and yet was there not a moment in the history of the world—a moment to be fully felt and gone through by Manlius—when, flung from the Tarpeian rock, he, yet living, hung half-way between his gaping executioners above and his ruddy death among the stones below? "A hundred years after this!" Pompeius, the Roman, knew it; and yet was there not a moment in the history of the world—a moment fully to be endured by Pompeius—when, reading in the treacherous boat, he sat half-way between the ship that bore his destinies and his funeral pile on the Libyan shore? Centuries back in the past those moments now lie engulfed; but what is that to me? It is *my* turn now; here I am, wretched in this beastly Bristol, where Savage was allowed to starve in prison; and, by the very fact that I live, I have a right to my solicitude!'

Obstinate boy! is there then aught that can still, with some show of sense, be advised to you? Seek a friend. Leave the Catcotts, lay and clerical, the

Burgums, the Barretts, the Matthew Meases, and the rest of them, and seek some one true friend, such as surely even Bristol can supply, of about the same age as yourself, or, what were better, somewhat older. See him daily, walk with him, smoke with him, laugh with him, discuss religion with him, hear his experiences, show your poetry to him, and, above all, make a clean breast to him of your various delinquencies. Or, more efficient perhaps still, fall really in love. Avoid the Miss Rumseys, and find out some beauty of a better kind, to whom, with or without hope, you can vow the future of your noblest heart. Find her; walk beneath her window; catch glimpses of her; dream of her; if fortune favours, woo her, and (true you are but seventeen!) win her. Bristol will then be a paradise; its sky will be lightsome, its streets beautiful, its mayor tolerable, its clergy respectable, and all its warehouses palaces!

Is this also nonsense? Well, then, my acquaintance with general biography enables me to tell you of one particular family at this moment living in Bristol, with which it might be well for you to get acquainted. Mr. Barrett might be able to introduce you. The family I mean is that of the Mores, five sisters, who keep a boarding-school for young ladies

in Park Street, 'the most flourishing establishment of its kind in the west of England.' The Miss Mores, as you know, are praised by all the mothers in Bristol as extremely clever and accomplished young women; and one of them, Miss Hannah, is, like yourself, a writer of verses, and, like yourself, destined to literary celebrity. Now, I do not wish to be mischievous; but, seeing that posterity will wish that you two, living as you did in the same town, should at least have met and spoken with each other, might I suggest a notion to you? Could you not elope with Hannah More? True, she is seven years your senior, extremely sedate, and the very last person in the world to be guilty of any nonsense with an attorney's apprentice. Nevertheless, try. Just think of the train of consequences: the whole boarding-school in a flutter; all Bristol scandalised; paragraphs in *Felix Farley's Journal*; and posterity effectually cheated of two things—the tragic termination of your life, and the admirable old maidenhood of hers!

Chatterton did not conceal his contempt from the very persons it was most likely to offend. Known not only as a transcriber of ancient English poetry but also as a poet in his own person, he began to

support his reputation in the latter character by producing from time to time, along with his Rowley poems, certain compositions of his own in a modern satirical vein. In these compositions, which were written after the manner of Churchill, there was the strangest possible jumble of crude Whig politics and personal scurrility against local notabilities. What effect they were likely to have on Chatterton's position in his native town may be inferred from a specimen or two. How would Broderip, the organist, like this?—

> 'While Broderip's humdrum symphonies of flats
> Rival the harmony of midnight cats.'

Or the lay Catcott this allusion to a professional feat of his in laying the topstone of a spire?—

> 'Catcott is very fond of talk and fame,—
> His wish a perpetuity of name;
> Which to procure, a pewter altar's made
> To bear his name and signify his trade,
> In pomp burlesqued the rising spire to head,
> To tell futurity a pewterer's dead.'

And how would the clerical Catcott like this reference to his orthodoxy?—

> 'Might we not, Catcott, then infer from hence
> Your zeal for Scripture hath devoured your sense?'

Or what would the mayor say to this?—

> 'Let Harris wear his self-sufficient air,
> Nor dare remark, for Harris is a mayor.'

Or the civic dignity of Bristol generally to this?—

> ''Tis doubtful if her aldermen can read:
> This of a certainty the muse may tell—
> None of her common-councilmen can spell.'

Clearly enough an attorney's apprentice that was in the habit of showing about such verses was not in the way to procure patronage and goodwill. If, however, any of his friends remonstrated with him, his answer was ready—

> 'Damn'd narrow notions, tending to disgrace
> The boasted reason of the human race!
> Bristol may keep her prudent maxims still;
> But know, my saving friends, I never will.
> The composition of my soul is made
> Too great for servile, avaricious trade,
> When, raving in the lunacy of ink,
> I catch the pen, and publish what I think.'

Accordingly, Chatterton continued to support, in the eyes of the portion of the community of Bristol that knew him, a twofold character—that on the one hand of an enthusiastic youth with much antiquarian knowledge, the possessor of many antique manuscripts, chiefly poetry of the fifteenth century, and that on

the other of an ill-conditioned boy of spiteful temper, the writer of somewhat clever but very scurrilous verses. Nay, more, it was observable that the latter character was growing upon him, apparently at the expense of the former; for, while up to his seventeenth year (1768-9) his chief recreation had seemed to be in his antiques and Rowley MSS., after that date he seemed to throw his antiques aside, and to devote all his time to imitations of the satires of Churchill under such names as *The Consuliad*, *Kew Gardens*, etc. And here the reader must permit me a little *Essay or Interleaf on the Character and Writings of Chatterton.*

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ALL thinking persons have now agreed to abandon that summary method of dealing with human character according to which unusual and eccentric courses of action are attributed to mere caprices on the part of the individuals concerned, mere obstinate determinations to go out of the common route.

> 'The dog, to gain his private ends,
> Went mad, and bit the man'

is a maxim less in repute than it once was. In such cases as that of Chatterton, it is now be-

lieved, deeper causes are always operating than the mere wish to deceive people and make a figure.

Now, in the case of Chatterton, it appears, we must first of all take for granted an extraordinary natural precocity or prematurity of the faculties. We are aware that there is a prejudice against the use of this hypothesis. But why should it be so? How otherwise can we represent to ourselves the cause of that diversity which we see in men than by going deeper than all that we know of pedigree, and conceiving the birth of every new soul to be, as it were, a distinct creative act of the Unseen Spirit? That now, in some Warwickshire village, the birth should be a Shakespeare, and that, again, in the poor posthumous child of a dissipated Bristol choir-singer the tiny body should be shaken by the surcharge of soul within it, are not miracles in themselves, but only variations in the great standing miracle that there should be birth at all. Nor with the idea of precocity is it necessary to associate that either of disease or of insanity. There was nothing in Chatterton to argue disease in the ordinary sense, or to indicate that, had he lived, he might not, like Pope or Tasso, who were also precocious, have gone on steadily increasing in

ability till the attainment of a good old age. And, though it seems certain that there was a tendency to madness in the Chatterton blood—Chatterton's sister, Mrs. Newton, having afterwards had an attack of insanity—the use of this fact by Southey and others to explain the tenor of Chatterton's life has been too hasty and inconsiderate. On due investigation it might be found that there never was a man of genius who had not some relative in a lunatic asylum, or at least fit for one; and, so long as we can account for Chatterton's singularities in any other way, there is no reason, any more than in the similar instance of Charles Lamb, why we should attribute them to what was at the utmost only a dormant taint of madness in his constitution.

Assuming, then, that Chatterton, without being either a mere *lusus naturæ* or insane, was simply a child of very extraordinary endowments, we would point out, as the predominant feature in his character, his remarkable veneration for the antique. In the boyhood even of Sir Walter Scott, born as he was in the very midst of ballads and traditions, we see no manifestation of a love of the past and the historic nearly so strong as that which possessed Chatterton from his infancy. The earliest

form in which this constitutional peculiarity appeared in him seems to have been a fondness for the ecclesiastical antiquities of his native city, and, above all, an attachment to the old Gothic Church of St. Mary Redcliffe.

Some time ago we saw in a provincial Scottish newspaper an obituary notice of a poor idiot named John M'Bey, who had been for about sixty years a prominent character in the village of Huntly in Aberdeenshire. Where the poor creature had been born, no one knew; he had been found, when apparently about ten years old, wandering among the Gartly Hills, and had been brought by some country people into the village. Here, 'supported by the kindness of several families, at whose kitchen-tables he regularly took his place at one or other of the meals of the day,' he continued to reside ever after, a conspicuous figure in the schoolboy recollections of all the inhabitants for more than half a century. The 'shaggy carroty head, the vacant stare, the idle trots and aimless walks of "Jock," could yet,' said the notice, 'be recalled in a moment' by all that knew him. 'At an early period of his history,' proceeded the notice, 'he had formed a strong affection for the bell in the old ruined church of Ruthven, in the parish of

Cairnie; and many were the visits he paid to that object of, to him, surpassing interest. Having dubbed it with the name of "*Wow*," he embraced every opportunity at funerals to get a pull of the rope, interpreting the double peals, in his own significant language, to mean, "Come hame, come hame." Every funeral going to that churchyard was known to him; and, till his old age, he was generally the first person that appeared on the ground. The emblems of his favourite bell, in bright yellow, were sewed on his garments; and woe to the schoolboy that should utter a word in depreciation of his favourite. When near his end, he was asked how he felt. He said "he was ga'in awa' to the *wow*, nae to come back again." After his death, he was laid in his favourite burying-place, within sound of his cherished bell.'

Do not despise this little story, reader. To our fancy it illustrates much. As this poor idiot, debarred from all the general concerns of life, and untaught in other people's tenets, had invented a religion for himself, setting up as a central object in his own narrow circle of images an old ruined belfry, which had somehow (who knows through what horror of maternity?) caught his sense of mystery, clinging to this object with the whole

tenacity of his affections, and even devising symbols by which it might be ever present to him: so, with more complex and less rude accompaniments, does the precocious boy of Bristol seem to have related himself to the Gothic fabric near which he first saw the light. This church was his fetich, his 'wow.' It was through it, as through a metaphorical gateway, that his imagination worked itself back into the great field of the past, so as to expatiate on the ancient condition of his native 'Brystowe' and the whole olden time of England.

This is no mere supposition. 'Chatterton,' says one of his earliest acquaintances, the Mr. William Smith above mentioned, 'was fond of walking in the 'fields, particularly in Redcliffe meadows, and of 'talking of his manuscripts, and sometimes reading 'them there. There was one spot in particular, full 'in view of the church, in which he seemed to take 'peculiar delight. He would frequently lay himself 'down, fix his eyes upon the church, and seem as 'if he were in a kind of trance; then, on a sudden, 'he would tell me, "That steeple was burnt down '"by lightning; that was the place where they '"formerly acted plays."' To the same effect are many allusions to the church found in the Rowley poems: for example, this—

'Thou seest this maistrie of a human hand,
The pride of Bristowe and the western land.'

And here we may remind the reader of a circumstance already mentioned: namely, that the ancestors of Chatterton had for a hundred and fifty years been sextons of this same Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, and that the office had only passed out of the family on the death of his father's elder brother, John. Chatterton's father, too, it should be remembered, was a choir-singer in the church; and Chatterton himself, while a child, had, in virtue of old family right and proximity of residence, had the run of its aisles and galleries. Can it be, we would ask the physiological philosophers, that a veneration for the edifice of St. Mary Redcliffe, and for all connected with it, had thus come down in the Chatterton blood; that the defunct old Chattertons, Johns and Thomases in their series, who had in times gone by paced along the interior of the church, jangling its ponderous keys, brushing away its cobwebs, and talking with its stony effigies of knights and saints buried below, had thus acquired, in gradually increasing mass, a store of antique associations to be transmitted as a fatal heritage to the unhappy youth in whom their line was to become extinct and immortal?

One can imagine that, in part, this was the case.

But Chatterton's disposition towards the antique did not remain a mere fetichistic instinct of veneration for the relic his ancestors had guarded. From his very boyhood he entered with all the zeal of a reader and intelligent inquirer into the service of his hereditary feeling. It would not be long, for example, before, passing from the edifice to its history, as recorded in the annals of Bristol, he would learn to pronounce, with undefinable reverence, the name of its founder, William Canynge, the Bristol merchant of the fifteenth century. Whatever particulars were to be gleaned from books regarding the life of this notable personage must have been familiar to Chatterton long before he ceased to be a Bluecoat scholar. How Canynge had been such a wealthy man that, according to William of Worcester, he was owner of ten vessels, and gave employment to one hundred mariners, as well as to one hundred artificers on shore; how he had been as munificent as he was wealthy; how he had been mayor of Bristol in 1431, and four separate times afterwards; how he and the town had become involved in the Wars of the Roses, and how, on the accession of Edward IV., he had

made the peace of the town by paying a fine to that monarch; how, finally, he had become a priest in his old age, and devoted a large part of his fortune to the erection, or rather reconstruction, of the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe: all this knowledge, easily accessible to an inquiring Bristol boy, Chatterton would collect and ponder.

Chatterton, however, was not merely an inquisitive lad; he was a young poet, full of enthusiasm and constructive talent. Hence, not satisfied with a meagre outline of the story of Canynge, as it could be derived from the chronicles of Bristol, he set him to fill up the outline by conjectures and synchronisms, so as to make clear for himself *Canynge's Life and Times* as a luminous little spot in the general darkness of the English past. And here comes in the story of the old parchments.

Over the north porch of St. Mary Redcliffe was a room known as 'the muniment-room.' Here, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, there lay six or seven locked chests, which were understood to contain old deeds and other writings. One of the chests was traditionally known as 'Mr. Canynge's Coffer.' The keys of this chest had been long lost; and, when, in the year 1727, it was deemed expedient to secure some title-deeds that were believed

to be contained in it, a locksmith was employed to break it open. Such documents as were thought of importance were then removed, and the rest were left in the open chest as of no value. The other chests were similarly treated. Accordingly, parcels of the remaining contents were afterwards, from time to time, carried off by various persons; and, in particular, it was remembered that, when John Chatterton was sexton, his brother, the choir-singer and teacher of Pyle Street School, had carried off a quantity of them to be used as book-covers or for similar purposes. A bundle of these parchments remained in the possession of Mrs. Chatterton after her husband's death, and such of them as had not been previously snipped into thread-papers came into Chatterton's hands.

What those old documents really contained we have no means of knowing. That some of them may have been papers of historical value is not improbable. It is certain, at least, that they interested Chatterton, that the possession of them nourished his sense of the antique, and that he learned to decipher parts of them, catching out old bits of Latin or French phraseology, which he mis-wrote in copying. We may even go farther, and surmise that out of those papers he may have derived hints that were of use to him in his attempt

to represent the circumstances of Canynge's life. They may have helped him, for example, to appropriate names for some of those fictitious or semi-fictitious personages whom he thought proper to group around Canynge in that tableau or historical romance of *Bristol in the Fifteenth Century* with the construction of which he regaled himself.

Of these secondary *dramatis personæ*, grouped in his imagination around Canynge, the most important was a supposed priest described as Thomas Rowley, or, more fully, as 'Thomas Rowlie, parish-preeste of St. John's in the city of Bristol.' The relations between Canynge and Rowley, as bodied forth in Chatterton's conception, were as follows;—Rowley, who had been at school in Bristol with Canynge, became chaplain to Canynge's father. On that old gentleman's death, Canynge, then a rising young merchant, continued the family patronage to his schoolmate, and employed him, amongst other things, in collecting manuscripts and drawings for him. About the time of Canynge's first mayoralty, in 1431, Rowley was settled as parish-priest of St. John's; and from that time forward, for a period of thirty or forty years, the two men continued on terms of the most friendly and cordial intimacy—Canynge, the wealthiest man in the west

of England, and the civic soul of Bristol, living as a liberal merchant-prince in a noble residence, and Rowley, the man of books and literature, in a modest priest's habitation, made comfortable by his patron's munificence. These two men, with a few others of minor activity — Carpenter, Bishop of Bristol, Sir Tibbot Gorges, a country gentleman of the neighbourhood, Sir Charles Baldwin, a brave knight of the Lancastrian faction, Iscam, another priest of Bristol, Ladgate, a monk of London, etc., etc.,—constituted, in fact, an enlightened little club in Chatterton's ideal Bristol of 1430-60, enlivening that city by their amateur theatricals and other relaxations from more severe business, and rendering it more distinguished for culture than any other town in England, except Oxford and London. The fine old merchant himself occasionally used his pen to some purpose; as in his epigram on the imaginary John à Dalbenie, a hot politician of the town—

> 'John makes a jar 'bout Lancaster and York :
> Be still, good man, and learn to mind thy work !'

Generally, however, he abstained from literature himself, and preferred reading or hearing the productions of his friends Iscam and Rowley, but especially those of Rowley, who was his poet-laureate.

Had Chatterton put forth this coinage of his brain

in the shape of a professed historical romance, all would have been well. But, from working so lovingly in the *matter* of antiquity, he had contracted also a preference for the antique in *form*. As Scott, in the very process of realising the Quentin Durwards, the Mause Headriggs, and the Jedediah Cleishbothams of his fictions, acquired in his own person an antique way of thinking, and a mastery over the antique glossary, if not a positive affection for it, so it became natural to Chatterton, revelling as he did in conceptions of the antique, to draw on an ancient-fashioned suit of thought, and make use of antique forms of language. Hence, when, prompted by his literary impulse, he sought to embody in verse any of those traditions or fictions relative to the past time of England which his enthusiasm for the antique had led him to fix upon—as, for example, the story of the Danish invasions of England, the story of the Battle of Hastings, or the story of a tournament in the reign of Edward I.—he found himself obliged by a kind of artistic necessity to impart a quaintness to his style by the use of old vocables and idioms. Persisted in for the mere pleasure of the exercise, the habit would become exaggerated, till at last it would amount to an ungovernable disposition to riot in the obsolete.

Even thus far, however, there was nothing blameworthy. In thus selecting a style artificially antique for the conveyance of his historic fancies, Chatterton, it might be affirmed, had but obeyed the proper instinct of his genius, and chosen that element in which he found he could work best. Every man has his mode, or set of assumed conditions, most favourable for the production and the development of what is best in him; and in Chatterton's case this mode, this set of conditions, consisted in an affectation of the antique. For, let any one compare the Rowley Poems of Chatterton with his own acknowledged productions, and the conclusion will be inevitable that his *forte* was the antique, and that here alone lay any preternatural power he possessed. There are in his acknowledged poems, indeed, felicities of expression and gleams of genius, showing that even as a modern poet he might in time have taken a high rank; but, to do justice to his astonishing abilities, one must read his antique compositions. In the element of the antique Chatterton moves like a master; in his modern effusions he is but a clever boy beginning to handle with some effect the language of Pope and Dryden. Moreover, there is a perceptible moral difference between the two classes of his performances. In his

antique poems there is freshness, enthusiasm, and a fine sense of the becoming; throughout the modern ones we are offended by irreverence, malevolence, and a kind of vicious, boyish pruriency. And, conscious as Chatterton must have been of this difference, aware as he must have been that it was when he wrote in his artificially-antique style that his invention worked most powerfully, his heart beat most warmly, and the poetic shiver ran most keenly through his veins, we cannot wonder that he should have given himself up to this kind of literary recreation rather than to any other.

Unfortunately, however, meaner causes were all this while at work. There was maliciousness towards individuals; there was craving for notoriety; there was delight in misleading people; and, above all, there was want of money. Moreover, for this unhappy combination of moral states and dispositions it so happened that the Grandfather of Lies had a very suitable temptation ready, in the shape of that most successful literary exploit, the Ossian Poems, then in the first blush of their contested celebrity. Yielding to the temptation, Chatterton resolved to turn what was best and most original in his genius, his enthusiasm for the antique, into the service of his worst propensities. In other

words, he resolved to adopt, with certain variations and adaptations to his own case, the trick of Macpherson. That this was the act of one express and distinct determination of his will—a solemn and secret compact with himself, made at a very early period indeed, probably before the conclusion of his fifteenth year—there can be no doubt. The elaboration of his scheme of imposture, however, was gradual. The first exhibition of it, and probably that which suggested much that followed, was the Burgum hoax, with its after-thought of the old English poet, John de Bergham. Of this original trick the Rowley device was but a gigantic expansion. To invent a poet of the past on whom to father all his own compositions in the antique style, and to give this poet a probable and fixed footing in history, was the essential form of the scheme. That the poet thus invented should be a native of Bristol, and that his date should be in the times of the merchant Canynge, were special accidents determined by Chatterton's position and peculiar opportunities. And thus the two processes of invention, the legitimate and the illegitimate, worked into each other's hands—Chatterton's previous conceptions of the life and times of Canynge providing him with a proper chronological and topographical environment

for his required poet, and his device of the poet giving richness and interest to his romance of Canynge. Once begun, there were powerful reasons why the deceit should be persevered in. There was the pleasure of the jest itself; there was the secret sense of superiority it gave him; there was its advantage as a means of hooking half-crowns out of people's pockets; and, last, though not least, there was the impossibility of retracting without being knocked down by Barrett for damaging his history or kicked by the Catcotts for having made fools of them. Hence, by little and little, the whole organisation of the imposture, from the first rumour of old manuscripts to the use of ochre, black lead, and smoke in preparing specimens of them.

But Chatterton, as has been already hinted, was not a literary monomaniac, a creature of one faculty. His enthusiasm for the antique, although the most remarkable part of him, was not the whole of him. The Rowley habit of thought and expression, though he liked to put it on, was also a thing that he could at pleasure throw off. Though an antiquarian, and a midnight reader of Speght's Chaucer and other black-letter volumes, he was also an attorney's apprentice, accustomed to small flirtations, accustomed to debate and to brawl

with other attorneys' apprentices, to read the newspapers and magazines, to be present at street mobs and public meetings, and in every other way to take an apprentice's interest in the ongoings of the day. In short, besides being an antiquarian, and a creative genius in the element of the English antique, Chatterton was also, in the year 1769-70, a complete and very characteristic specimen of that long-extinct phenomenon, a brisk young Englishman of the early part of the reign of George III. In other words, reader, besides being, by the special charter of his genius, a poet in the Rowley vein, he was also, by the more general right of his life at that time, very much such a youngster as your own unmarried great-great-grandfather was.

And what was that? Why, reader, your unmarried great-great-grandfather, besides wearing a wig (which Chatterton did not), a coat with lapels and flaps, knee-breeches, buckles, and a cocked hat, was also, probably, a wild young dog of a freethinker, fond of Churchill and Wilkes's 'Essay on Woman,' addicted to horrible slang against Bute and the whole Scottish nation, and raving mad about a thing he called Liberty. He read and repeated Junius, made jokes against parsons, and talked Deism and very improper doctrine on

various social subjects. Now Chatterton, up to his capacities as a youth of seventeen, was all this. He repudiated orthodoxy, refused to be called a Christian, and held the whole clerical profession in unbounded contempt. He drew up articles of faith on a slip of paper (still to be seen in the British Museum) which he carried in his pocket; which articles of faith were very much what Pope believed before him, and what Burns, Byron, and others have believed since. In short, he was recognised in Bristol circles as an avowed free-thinker. His politics were to correspond. He sneered at Samuel Johnson, and thought him an old Tory bigot who had got a pension for political partisanship; he delighted in the scandal about Bute and the King's mother; he thought the King himself an obstinate dolt; he denounced Grafton and the ministry to small Bristol audiences; and he desired the nation to rally round Wilkes.

One remark more is necessary at this point. As Chatterton was the dual phenomenon that we have described—as he was composed of a mania for the antique, and of that general assemblage of more ordinary qualities and prejudices which constituted the bustling young Englishman of his era—so, it appears, the latter part of his character had

begun, about his seveententh year, to gain upon him. Abandoning the antique vein, wherein he had, as it were, a native gift ready fashioned from the first, and all but independent of culture, he had begun to court his more general faculties of thought and observation, and to give himself more willingly up to that species of literature in which, equally with any other clever young man, he could hope to attain ease and perfection only by the ordinary processes of assiduity and practice. Had he lived, there was an amount of general vigour and acquisition in him that would have secured him eminence even in this field and have made him one of the conspicuous writers of the eighteenth century; but, dying as he did so early, the only bequest of real value he has left to the world is that more specific and unaccountable product of his genius, the Rowley antiques.

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To a provincial attorney's apprentice, full of literary aspirations, disgusted with his position in life, yet with no immediate prospect of a better, there was but one outlook of any reasonable hope or promise. It was the chance of being able, in the meantime, to form some connection with London periodicals or publishers. Accordingly, this was

the chance which Chatterton, whose highest printed venture hitherto had been in the columns of *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, set himself to realise.

His first attempt was upon Dodsley, the publisher of Pall Mall, the brother and successor in business of the more celebrated Robert Dodsley, the author of the 'Muse in Livery' and other trifles of some note in their day, and the projector, along with Burke, of the *Annual Register*. The Dodsleys, it should be mentioned, had published a standard collection of ancient and modern English poetry, to which, it was understood, additions would be made in subsequent volumes. This fact, the notoriety of the *Annual Register*, then in the tenth year of its existence, and probably also the circumstance, not likely to be overlooked by a young *littérateur*, that in that periodical there was a department for literary contributions and poetry, pointed Dodsley out to Chatterton as a likely person for his purpose. Accordingly, one morning towards the Christmas of 1768, the worthy publisher, entering his shop in Pall Mall, finds among his letters one from Bristol, addressed in a neat small hand, and worded as follows—

'BRISTOL, *December* 21, 1768

SIR,—I take this method to acquaint you that I can

procure copies of several ancient poems, and an interlude, perhaps the oldest dramatic piece extant, wrote by one Rowley, a priest of Bristol, who lived in the reigns of Henry VI. and Edward IV. If these pieces will be of service to you, at your command copies shall be sent to you by your most obedient servant, D. B.

Please to direct to D. B., to be left with Mr. Thomas Chatterton, Redcliffe Hill, Bristol.'

In reply to this, Dodsley probably sent an intimation to the effect that he would be glad to see the poems in question, particularly the interlude; for the following letter—turned up long afterwards, with the foregoing, among the loose papers in Dodsley's counting-house—looks as if Chatterton had at least received a reply to his note:—

'BRISTOL, *Feb.* 15, 1769

SIR,—Having intelligence that the tragedy of *Ælla* was in being, after a long and laborious search I was so happy as to attain a sight of it. I endeavoured to obtain a copy of it to send you; but the present possessor absolutely denies to give me one, unless I give him one guinea for a consideration. As I am unable to procure such a sum, I made a search for another copy, but unsuccessfully. Unwilling such a beauteous piece should be lost, I have made bold to apply to you. Several gentlemen of learning who have seen it join with me in praising it. I am far from having any mercenary views for myself in the affair, and, was I able, would print it at my own risk. It is a perfect tragedy—the plot clear, the language

spirited, and the songs (interspersed in it) flowing, poetical, and elegantly simple, the similes judiciously applied, and, though wrote in the age of Henry VI., not inferior to many of the present age. If I can procure a copy, with or without the gratification, it shall be immediately sent to you. The motive that actuates me to do this is to convince the world that the monks (of whom some have so despicable an opinion) were not such blockheads as generally thought, and that good poetry might be wrote in the dark days of superstition, as well as in these more enlightened ages. An immediate answer will oblige. I shall not receive your favour as for myself, but as your agent.—

I am, sir, your most obedient servant,

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

P.S.—My reason for concealing my name was lest my master (who is now out of town) should see my letters, and think I neglected his business. Direct for me on Redcliffe Hill.

[Here followed an extract from the tragedy, as a specimen of the style.]

'The whole contains about one thousand lines. If it should not suit you, I should be obliged to you if you would calculate the expense of printing it, as I will endeavour to publish it by subscription on my own account.

*To* Mr. JAMES DODSLEY, *Bookseller, Pall Mall, London.*'

This clumsy attempt to extract a guinea from the publisher (Chatterton had probably just finished his own manuscript of *Ælla*, and did not like the notion of copying out so long a poem on mere

chance) very naturally failed. Mr. Dodsley did not think the speculation worth risking a guinea on; and '*Ælla, a Tragycal Enterlude, or Discoorseynge Tragedie, wrotten by Thomas Rowllie; plaiedd before Mastre Canynge, atte hys Howse, nempte the Rodde Lodge*' remained useless among Chatterton's papers.

Chatterton was not daunted. Among the notabilities of the time with whose name his own excursions in the field of literature necessarily made him acquainted, there was one towards whom, for many reasons, he felt specially attracted—the ingenious Horace Walpole, then a gentleman of fifty-two, leading his life of luxurious gossip and literary ease between his town house in Arlington Street, Piccadilly, and his country seat at Strawberry Hill, Twickenham. Known in the world of letters by his *Castle of Otranto*, his tragedy of *The Mysterious Mother*, his *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors*, and other various productions, Walpole was at that time busy in collecting additional materials for his *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, the publication of which he had begun in 1761. It is on this circumstance that Chatterton fastens. One evening in March 1769, Mr. Walpole,

sitting, we will suppose, by his library fire in Arlington Street, has a packet brought him by his bookseller, Mr. Bathoe of the Strand (the first man, by-the-bye, that kept a circulating library in London). Opening the packet, he finds, first of all, the following note—

'SIR,—Being versed a little in antiquities, I have met with several curious manuscripts, among which the following may be of service to you in any future edition of your truly entertaining *Anecdotes of Painting*. In correcting the mistakes (if any) in the notes, you will greatly oblige your most humble servant, THOMAS CHATTERTON.

BRISTOL, *March* 25; CORN STREET.'

Appended to this short note were several pages of antique writing, entitled '*The Ryse of Peyncteyne in Englande, wroten by T. Rowlie*, 1469, *for Mastre Canynge*,' and commencing as follows;—'Peynctynge ynn England haveth of ould tyme bin yn use; for, saieth the Roman wryters, the Brytonnes dyd depycte themselves, yn soundrie wyse, of the fourmes of the sonne and moone, wyth the heerbe woade: albeytte I doubte theie were no skylled carvellers.' After which introduction, the document went on to give biographical notices of certain distinguished painters that flourished in England during Saxon times and in the early Norman reigns. Attached

to the document were explanatory notes in Chatterton's own name. One of these notes informed Walpole who Rowley, the reputed author of the MS., was:—'His merit as a biographer and historiographer is 'great; as a poet still greater: some of his pieces 'would do honour to Pope; and the person under 'whose patronage they may appear to the world 'will lay the Englishman, the antiquary, and the 'poet, under eternal obligation.' Another note performed a like biographical office for Canynge, that 'Mæcenas of his time'; and a third conveyed the information that one John, the second Abbot of St. Austin's in Bristol, mentioned in the text as 'the fyrste Englyshe paynstere in oyles,' was also the greatest poet of his age (A.D. 1186), and gave, as a specimen of his poetry, three stanzas on Richard I. Finally, Chatterton offered to put Walpole in possession of still other particulars from the same source.

Whether from the suddenness and *naïveté* of the attack, or from the stupefying effects of the warm air of his library on a March evening, Walpole was completely taken in. He can hardly have glanced over the whole letter when, really interested by its contents, he took his pen and wrote the following reply—

'ARLINGTON ST., *March* 28, 1769.

'SIR—I cannot but think myself singularly obliged by a gentleman with whom I have not the pleasure of being acquainted, when I read your very curious and kind letter, which I have this minute received. I give you a thousand thanks for it, and for the very obliging offer you make of communicating your manuscript to me. What you have already sent me is valuable, and full of information; but, instead of correcting you, sir, you are far more able to correct me. I have not the happiness of understanding the Saxon language, and, without your learned notes, should not have been able to comprehend Rowley's text.

'As a second edition of my *Anecdotes* was published last year, I must not flatter myself that a third will be wanted soon; but I shall be happy to lay up any notices you will be so good as to extract for me and send me at your leisure; for, as it is uncertain when I may use them, I would by no means borrow or detain your MSS.

'Give me leave to ask you where Rowley's poems are to be found. I should not be sorry to print them, or at least a specimen of them, if they have never been printed.

'The Abbot John's verses that you have given me are wonderful for their harmony and spirit, though there are some words that I do not understand. You do not point out exactly the time when he lived; which I wish to know, as I suppose it was long before John van Eyck's discovery of oil-painting: if so, it confirms what I have guessed and hinted in my *Anecdotes*, that oil-painting was known here much earlier than that discovery or revival.

'I will not trouble you with more questions now, Sir; but flatter myself, from the urbanity and politeness you have already shown me, that you will give me leave to consult you. I hope, too, you will forgive the simplicity

of my direction, as you have favoured me with none other. —'I am, sir, your much obliged and obedient servant,

'HORACE WALPOLE.

'P.S.—Be so good as to direct to Mr. Walpole, Arlington Street.'

Chatterton was highly elated. He had received a letter from the great Horace Walpole, written as from an equal to an equal! How differently men of that stamp treated one from the Catcotts, the Barretts, and other local persons! In haste to acknowledge such politeness, he sends off a supplementary *Historie of Peyncters yn England bie T. Rowlie*, containing sketches of two new poets, —Ecca, a Saxon bishop of the year 557, and Elman, a Saxon bishop of the same epoch,—with specimens of their verses translated from the original Saxon by Rowley. He adds some more verses of the Abbot John's, and promises a complete transcript of Rowley's works as soon as he shall have had time to make one. At the same time he gives Walpole a confidential account of himself and his prospects. This part of the letter is lost; but Walpole thus states his recollections of its tenor;—'He informed me that he was the son of a poor widow, who supported him with great difficulty; that he was a clerk or apprentice to

an attorney, but had a taste and turn for more elegant studies; and hinted a wish that I would assist him with my interest in emerging out of so dull a profession by procuring him some place in which he could pursue his natural bent.'

Clearly Chatterton was never so near telling the whole truth as when, touched by Walpole's politeness, he thus addressed him as his only available friend. One is sorry that he did not try the effect of a full confession. Had Walpole received a letter from his unknown correspondent conveying, in addition to the foregoing particulars, this farther acknowledgment,—that what he had sent to him, Mr. Walpole, was not a real extract from a MS., but a forgery; that for more than a year he had been palming off similar forgeries on various persons in Bristol, but that now he was heartily tired of the mystification and would fain be out of it; and that, if Mr. Walpole, with such specimens before him of the writer's powers as those pretended antiques afforded, should be disposed to add the kindness of his practical assistance to that of his forgiveness for the trick attempted on him, he would thereby earn the writer's lasting gratitude, and save a life not wholly irretrievable;—one wonders greatly what, in such

circumstances, Horace Walpole would have done. Would the reflection in the library in Arlington Street have been 'The impudent young scoundrel! I will write to his master'; or would it have been 'Poor young fellow! he throws himself upon me, and I must do something for him'?

Unfortunately, Chatterton did not put it in Walpole's option whether he would be thus generous. He left the virtuoso to discover the fact of the imposture for himself. Nor was it difficult to do so. On the very second reading of the communication to which, in a moment of credulity, he had returned so polite a reply, Walpole, sufficiently alive, one would think, to the possibility of a literary trick (his own *Castle of Otranto* had been published as a pretended translation from a black-letter book printed at Naples in 1529, and he had but recently been implicated in the Ossian business), must have begun to suspect that all was not right. A series of Anglo-Saxon painters till then unheard of; a new poet of the twelfth century writing a poem on Richard I. in perfectly modern metre; and a new poet of the fifteenth advertised as having left numerous poems and other writings still extant in Bristol: all this in one letter was too much; and little wonder if, as he afterwards said, his reflection was that 'somebody,

having met his *Anecdotes of Painting*, had a mind to laugh at him.' But, when the second letter came, bringing with it a batch of new painters, and specimens of two Saxon poets of the sixth century, and when in this letter the writer explained that he was a poor widow's son with a turn for literature, there could be no longer any doubt in the matter. His friends Gray and Mason, to whom he showed the documents, concurred with him in thinking them forgeries, and 'recommended the returning them without farther notice.' But Walpole, with an amount of good-nature for which he does not get credit, did not act so summarily. He took the trouble, he says, to write to a relation of his, an old lady residing at Bath, desiring her to make inquiries about Chatterton. The reply was a confirmation of Chatterton's story about himself, but 'nothing was returned about his character.' In these circumstances, Walpole discharged the whole matter from his mind thus—

'Being satisfied with my intelligence about Chatterton, I wrote him a letter with as much kindness and tenderness as if I had been his guardian; for, though I had no doubt of his impositions, such a spirit of poetry breathed in his coinage as interested me for him; nor was it a grave crime in a young bard to have forged false notes of hand that were to pass current only in the parish of Parnassus. I

undeceived him about my being a person of any interest, and urged to him that, in duty and gratitude to his mother, who had straitened herself to breed him up to a profession, he ought to labour in it, that in her old age he might absolve his filial debt; and I told him that, when he should have made his fortune, he might unbend himself with the studies consonant to his inclinations. I told him also that I had communicated his transcripts to much better judges, and that they were by no means satisfied with the authenticity of his supposed MSS.'

In fancying the impatient 'Bah, old gentleman! don't I know all that myself?' with which the disappointed boy, reading this letter, must have received its advice, the question is apt to recur to us, How is it that, with such evidence before their eyes of the uselessness of advice, people are so stupid as to persist in giving it? But the remark of a late eminent statistician comes to mind. 'Advice,' said he, 'probably saves a percentage.' And certainly this puts the matter on its right basis.

Chatterton sent two letters in reply to that of Walpole. In the first, the tone of which is somewhat downcast, he professes himself unable to dispute with a person of such literary distinction respecting the age of a MS., thanks him for his advice, and expresses his resolution to follow it. 'Though I am but sixteen years old,' he says, 'I have lived long enough to see that poverty attends

literature.' The second letter, which is dated April 14th, is more abrupt. Here he expresses his conviction that the papers of Rowley are genuine, and requests Walpole, unless he should be inclined to publish the transcripts, to return them, as he wishes to give them to 'Mr. Barrett, an able antiquary, now writing the *History of Bristol*,' and has no other copy.

When this second note reached Arlington Street, Walpole was on the eve of a journey to Paris; and, in the hurry, the request to return the MSS. was not attended to. Again Chatterton wrote; but, as the virtuoso was absent, he received no answer. It was not till after six weeks that Walpole returned to London; and then so insignificant a matter was not likely to be remembered. Towards the close of July, however, and when he had been again in town five or six weeks, he was reminded of his Bristol correspondent by the receipt of what he thought 'a singularly impertinent note'—

'SIR,—I cannot reconcile your behaviour to me with the notions I once entertained of you. I think myself injured, sir; and, did you not know my circumstances, you would not dare to treat me thus. I have sent twice for a copy of the MSS.; no answer from you. An explanation or excuse for your silence would oblige

'THOMAS CHATTERTON.

'*July* 24.'

Walpole's conduct on the receipt of this note we will let himself relate :—

'My heart did not accuse me of insolence to him. I wrote an answer expostulating with him on his injustice, and renewing good advice; but, upon second thoughts, reflecting that so wrong-headed a young man, of whom I knew nothing, and whom I had never seen, might be absurd enough to print my letter, I flung it into the fire; and, snapping up both his poems and letters, without taking a copy of either (for which I am now sorry), I returned both to him, and thought no more of him or them.'

Thus ended the correspondence between Walpole and Chatterton, Walpole soon forgetting the whole affair, and Chatterton persisting in his belief that, had he not committed the blunder of letting his aristocratic correspondent know that he was a poor widow's son, he would have fared better at his hands. No doubt there was something in this. But, of all the unreasonable things ever done by a misjudging public, certainly that of condemning Walpole to infamy for his conduct in this affair and charging on him all the tragic sequel of Chatterton's life is one of the most unreasonable. Why, the probability is that Walpole behaved better than most people would have done in the circumstances! Let any one in the present day fancy how *he* would act

if some one utterly unknown to him were to try to impose on him in a similar way through the post-office. Would the mere cleverness of the cheat take away the instinctive frown of resentment, and change it into admiring enthusiasm? That there may possibly have been in London at that time persons of rare goodness, of overflowing tolerance and compassion, that would have acted differently from the virtuoso of Arlington Street—persons who, saying to themselves, 'Here is a poor young man of abilities in a bad way,' would have immediately called for their carpet bags, and set off for Bristol by coach, to dig out the culprit, and lecture him soundly, and make a man of him—we will not deny. If that time was like the present, however, such men, we fear, must have been very thinly scattered, and very hard to find. Looking back now, we must, of course, feel that it was a pity the correspondence did not lead to a better issue; and Walpole himself lived to know this. But, as Burke has said, 'Men are wise with little reflection, and good with little self-denial, in the business of all times except their own.' Let, therefore, such as are disposed to blame Walpole in this affair lay the whole story to heart in the form of a maxim for their own guidance.

While the correspondence with Walpole had been going on, Chatterton had not been idle. In the month of January 1769 there appeared in London the first number of a new periodical, called the *Town and Country Magazine*. It was somewhat on the model of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and of those other curious monthly collections of scraps with which our ancestors, strangers to the more elaborate entertainment of modern periodicals, used to regale their leisure. Here was an opportunity for the young *littérateur* of Bristol. Accordingly, in the February number (magazines were then published retrospectively, *i.e.*, at the close of the month whose name they bore) there appeared two contributions from the pen of Chatterton: one a prose account of the costume of Saxon heralds, signed 'D.B.'; the other a little complimentary poem addressed to 'Mr Alcock, the miniature painter of Bristol,' and signed 'Asaphides.' Over these signatures he continued to contribute to the magazine; and effusions of his, chiefly Ossianic prose-poems, purporting to be from the Saxon or the ancient British, appeared in all the subsequent numbers for the year 1769, except those of June, September, and October. In the number for May appeared one of the finest of his minor Rowley poems. In short, at the publishing office

of the *Town and Country* in London the handwriting of 'D. B.' of Bristol must have been recognised, in 1769, as that of one of the established correspondents of the magazine; and in Bristol it must have been a fact known and enviously commented on among the Carys, the Smiths, the Kators, and other young men of Chatterton's acquaintance, that he could have his pieces printed as often he liked in a London periodical. Chatterton felt the immensity of the honour; and there is extant a somewhat unveracious letter of his to a distant relative, 'a breeches-maker in Salisbury,' in which he brags of it. He tells the breeches-maker at the same time of his correspondence with Walpole. 'It ended,' he says, 'as most such do. I differed 'from him in the age of a MS.; he insists upon 'his superior talents, which is no proof of that 'superiority. We possibly may engage publicly in 'some one of the periodical publications, though I 'know not who will give the onset.'

The *Town and Country Magazine* seems to have been the only metropolitan print to which Chatterton was a contributor during the year 1769. But in the beginning of 1770 he succeeded in another venture, and became the correspondent also of a London newspaper.

The newspapers of that day were by no means such as we now see. The largest of them consisted of but a single sheet, corresponding in size with our small evening papers. Their contents, too, were neither so various nor so elaborately prepared as those of our present newspapers. Advertisements, paragraphs of political gossip picked up outside the Houses of Parliament, and scraps of miscellaneous town, country, and foreign news, constituted nearly all that the newspaper then offered to its readers. What we now call 'leading articles' were hardly known. It was enough for even a metropolitan journal to have one editorial hand to assist the publisher; and the notion of employing a staff of educated men to write comments on the proceedings of the day was but in its infancy. The place, however, of leading articles by paid *attachés* of the newspaper was in part supplied by the voluntary letters of numerous anonymous correspondents, interested in politics, and glad to see their lucubrations in print. Men of political note sometimes took this mode of serving the ends of their party; but the majority of the correspondents of newspapers were literary clients of official men, or private individuals scattered up and down the country. Chief of these unpaid journalists, king among the

numberless Brutuses, Publicolas, and Catos, that told the nation its grievances through the columns of the newspapers, was the terrible Junius of the *Public Advertiser*. The boldest of his letters was perhaps that containing his 'Address to the King,' which was published on the 19th December, 1769. The excitement that followed this letter, and above all the report that the publisher, Mr. H. J. Woodfall, was to be brought to account for it before the public tribunals, produced a crisis—some called it a panic, some a jubilee—in the newspaper world.

The other newspapers were, of course, anxious to obtain a share of the renown which the threatened prosecution conferred on the *Public Advertiser*. Accordingly, to reassure its correspondents, and to convince its subscribers of its unflinching liberalism in the midst of danger, the *Middlesex Journal*, a bi-weekly newspaper of the day, not far behind the *Advertiser* in credit, hastened to put forth the following manifesto—

'William George Edmunds, of Shoe Lane, in the parish of St. Andrew's, Holborn, Gent., maketh oath and saith, that he will not at any time declare the name of any person or persons who shall send any papers to the *Middlesex Journal or Chronicle of Liberty*, or any other publication in which he shall be concerned, without the express consent and direction of the author of such paper; and that he

will not make any discovery by which any of his authors can be found out; and that he will give to the public, in the fairest and fullest manner, all such essays, dissertations and other writings, without any alteration, so far as he can or ought, consistently with the duty of an honest man, a good member of society, a friend to his country, and a loyal subject.—W. G. EDMUNDS.

'Sworn at the Mansion House, London January 1st, 1770, before me, W. BECKFORD, Mayor.'

'N.B.—Mr. E. makes it a general rule to destroy all MSS. as soon as they are composed for the press. If any gentleman, however, is desirous of having his MSS. returned to him, Mr. E. begs that the words "to be returned," may be in large letters at the end of the originals. In that case they shall be preserved and delivered up to any person who shall bring an order for that purpose in the same handwriting as the original.'

As this manifesto of Mr. Edmunds, copied by us from the *Middlesex Journal* for February 6th 1770, was repeated in succeeding numbers, it probably caught Chatterton's eye in Bristol, and determined his already cherished intention of trying his hand at a newspaper article. At all events, he plunged at once *in medias res*. There had just been a change of Ministry. The Duke of Grafton, the favourite victim of Junius, had resigned and given place, for some secret Court reason, to the goggle-eyed Lord North. Chatterton, hearing much talk about this affair,

thinks it a good topic for his purpose, and, stealing a forenoon from his office-work, pens, in a style mimicked after that of Junius, a 'Letter to the Duke of G——n,' in which he informs that illustrious personage that his resignation has 'caused more speculation than any harlequinade he has already acted,' and tells him that, as he had been all along the tool of Bute, to whom he was at first recommended by his 'happy vacuity of invention,' so now it is Bute's influence that has dismissed him. This missive he dates 'Bristol, February 16,' and signs 'Decimus.' Mr. Edmunds, receiving it in his sanctum in Shoe Lane, glances over it, thinks it tolerably smart, and prints it. Whether the Duke of Grafton ever saw it, poor man, we do not know. If he did, 'One wasp more' would be his very natural reflection; and he would go on sipping his chocolate.

Chatterton's next contribution to the *Middlesex Journal*, or at least the next that Mr. Edmunds thought proper to print, was one with the same signature, dated 'Bristol, April 10, 1770,' and addressed to that much abused lady, the Princess Dowager of Wales, the mother, and, as people said, manager of the king. Here is a specimen—Junius, it will be observed, to the very cadence:—

'By you, men of no principles were thrust into offices they did not know how to discharge, and honoured with trusts they accepted only to violate; being made more conspicuously mean by communicating error and often vice to the character of the person who promoted them. None but a sovereign power can make little villains dangerous; the nobly vicious, the daringly ambitious, only rise from themselves. Without the influence of ministerial authority, Mansfield had been a pettifogging attorney, and Warburton a bustling country curate. The first had not lived to bury the substance of our laws in the shadows of his explanations; nor would the latter have confounded religion with deism, and proved of no use to either. . . . The state of affairs very much resembles the eve of the troubles of Charles I. Unhappy monarch, thou hast a claim, a dear-bought claim, to our pity; nothing but thy death could purchase it. Hadst thou died quietly and in peace, thou hadst died infamous; thy misfortunes were the only happy means of saving thee from the book of shame. What a parallel could the freedom of an English pen strike out!'

This letter was written on a Tuesday. On the Saturday, or, more probably, on the Monday following, there was a tremendous incident.

Chatterton, among his other eccentricities, had often been heard to talk familiarly of suicide. One evening, for example, pulling out a pistol in the presence of some of his companions, he had placed it to his forehead, saying 'Now, if one had but courage to draw the trigger!' Nor was this

mere juvenile affectation. Hateful from the first, Chatterton's position in Bristol had by this time become unendurable to him. All his literary honours, his contributorship to a London magazine and his correspondence with a London newspaper now included, were as nothing when put in the balance against his present servitude. If there were seasons when, sanguine in his hopes of a better future, he was able to keep his disgust within bounds, there were others when it rose to a perfect frenzy.

Such a season seems to have been the week in which the foregoing letter was written for the *Middlesex Journal*. By some pressure of circumstances Chatterton was that week reduced to the necessity of asking Burgum for a loan of money; which Burgum, at the last moment, refused. Chatterton has thus perpetuated the fact—

> 'When wildly squandering everything I got
> On books and learning, and the Lord knows what,
> Could Burgum then—my critic, patron, friend—
> Without security attempt to lend?
> No, that would be imprudent in the man:
> Accuse him of imprudence if you can!'

This disappointment throws him into a humour bordering on the suicidal; and, left alone in his master's office on the Saturday forenoon following, he displays it by penning a kind of satirical will

or suicide's farewell to the world. This extraordinary document, which is still extant, is headed thus—'All this wrote between 11 and 2 o'clock, Saturday, in the utmost distress of mind, April 14, 1770'; and, after some fifty lines of verse addressed to Burgum, the Rev. Mr. Catcott, and Barrett, it proceeds as follows—

'This is the last Will and Testament of me, Thomas Chatterton, of the city Bristol, being sound in body, or it is the fault of my last surgeon: the soundness of my mind the coroners are to be judges of—desiring them to take notice that the most perfect masters of human nature in Bristol distinguish me by the title of 'the mad genius'; therefore, if I do a mad action, it is conformable to every action of my life, which all savoured of insanity.

'*Item.*—If, after my death, which will happen to-morrow night before eight o'clock, being the Feast of the Resurrection, the coroner and jury bring it in lunacy, I will and direct that Paul Farr, Esq., and Mr. John Flower, at their joint expense, cause my body to be interred in the tomb of my fathers, and raise the monument over my body to the height of four feet five inches, placing the present flat stone on the top, and adding six tablets.'

[Here follow directions for certain engravings to be placed on the six tablets: viz., on two of them, fronting each other, certain heraldic achievements; on another, an inscription, in old English characters, to his ancestor, Guatevine Chatterton, A.D, 1210; on another, an inscription, in the same character, to another ancestor, Alanus Chatterton, A.D. 1415; on another an inscription, in

Roman letters, to the memory of his father; and on the remaining one this epitaph to himself—

'TO THE MEMORY OF
'THOMAS CHATTERTON

'Reader, judge not. If thou art a Christian, believe 'that he shall be judged by a supreme power: to that 'power alone is he now answerable.']

'And I will and direct that, if the coroner's inquest bring it in *felo de se*, the said monument shall be, notwithstanding, erected. And, if the said Paul Farr and John Flower have souls so Bristolish as to refuse this my request, they will transmit a copy of my will to the Society for supporting the Bill of Rights, whom I hereby empower to build the said monument according to the aforesaid directions. And, if they, the said Paul Farr and John Flower, should build the said monument, I will and direct that the second edition of my *Kew Gardens* shall be dedicated to them in the following dedication: "To Paul Farr and John Flower, Esqrs., this book is most humbly dedicated by the Author's Ghost."

'*Item*,—I give all my vigour and fire of youth to Mr. George Catcott, being sensible he is most in want of it.

'*Item*.—From the same charitable motive, I give and bequeath unto the Rev. Mr. Camplin, sen., all my humility. To Mr. Burgum all my prosody and grammar, likewise one moiety of my modesty; the other moiety to any young lady who can prove, without blushing, that she wants that valuable commodity. To Bristol all my spirit and disinterestedness, parcels of goods unknown on her quays since the days of Canning and Rowley. ('Tis true, a charitable gentleman, one Mr. Colston, smuggled a considerable quantity of it; but, it being proved that he was a Papist, the worshipful society of aldermen endeavoured to throttle

him with the oath of allegiance.) I leave also my religion to Dr. Cutts Barton, Dean of Bristol, hereby empowering the sub-sacrist to strike him on the head when he goes to sleep in church. My powers of utterance I give to the Rev. Mr. Broughton, hoping he will employ them to a better purpose than reading lectures on the immortality of the soul. I leave the Rev. Mr. Catcott some little of my free-thinking, that he may put on spectacles of reason, and see how vilely he is duped in believing the Scriptures literally. (I wish he and his brother George would know how far I am their real enemy: but I have an unlucky way of raillery; and, when the strong fit of satire is upon me, I spare neither friend nor foe. This is my excuse for what I have said of them elsewhere.) I leave Mr. Clayfield the sincerest thanks my gratitude can give; and I will and direct that, whatever any person may think the pleasure of reading my works worth, they immediately pay their own valuation to him, since it is then become a lawful debt to me, and to him as my executor in this case.

'I leave my moderation to the politicians on both sides of the question. I leave my generosity to our present right worshipful mayor, Thomas Harris, Esq. I give my abstinence to the company at the Sheriffs' annual feast in general, more particularly the aldermen.

'*Item.*—I give and bequeath to Mr. Matthew Mease a mourning ring with this motto, "Alas, poor Chatterton!" provided he pays for it himself. *Item.*—I leave the young ladies all the letters they have had from me, assuring them that they need be under no apprehensions from the appearance of my ghost, for I die for none of them. *Item.*—I leave all my debts, the whole not five pounds, to the payment of the charitable and generous Chamber of Bristol, on penalty, if refused, to hinder every member from a good dinner by appearing in the form of a bailiff. If, in defiance

of this terrible spectre, they obstinately persist in refusing to discharge my debts, let my two creditors apply to the supporters of the Bill of Rights. *Item.*—I leave my mother and sister to the protection of my friends, if I have any.

'Executed in the presence of Omniscience, this 14th of April, 1770.

'THOMAS CHATTERTON.'

Whether this dreadful document got immediately abroad among Chatterton's friends does not appear. Another document, however, written at the same time and in the same mad mood, was sufficiently alarming to produce a catastrophe. The Mr. Clayfield mentioned with such peculiar respect in the preceding paper, a distiller of means and respectability, and a friend of Mr. Lambert's, seems to have been a person of more than usual consideration in the eyes of Mr. Lambert's apprentice. To him, accordingly, rather than to any other person in Bristol, he chose to indite a letter conveying his intention of suicide. This letter—not actually sent to Mr. Clayfield by Chatterton, but inadvertently left about, it would appear, with that gentleman's address upon it—was prematurely delivered to him. Startled by its contents, he lost no time in communicating them to Mr. Lambert. There was an immediate consultation among Chatterton's friends, and Mr. Barrett undertook to see the infatuated lad, and

reason with him on the folly and criminality of his conduct. Accordingly, a long conversation took place between them, in which, to use his own words, he took Chatterton to task for the 'bad company and principles he had adopted,' and lectured him seriously 'on the horrible crime of self-murder, however glossed over by present libertines.' Chatterton was affected, and shed tears. The next day, however, he sent Mr. Barrett the following letter, the original of which may be seen in the British Museum—

'SIR—Upon recollection I don't know how Mr. Clayfield could come by his letter, as I intended to give him a letter, but did not. In regard to my motives for the supposed rashness, I shall observe that I keep no worse company than *myself*: I never drink to excess, and have, without vanity, too much sense to be attached to the mercenary retailers of iniquity. No, it is my PRIDE, my damn'd native unconquerable PRIDE, that plunges me into distraction. You must know that nineteen-twentieths of my composition is pride. I must either live a slave, a servant, to have no will of my own which I may freely declare as such, or DIE. Perplexing alternative! but it distracts me to think of it! I will endeavour to learn humility, but it cannot be here. What it may cost me in the trial Heaven knows.

'I am your much obliged unhappy humble servant,

'Thursday Evening. T. C.'

Before this letter had been written by Chatterton, one thing had been fully determined with regard to

him. Mr. Lambert was no longer to keep him in his service. Even had the lawyer himself been willing to make the attempt, the lawyer's mother, who kept house for him — an old lady between whom and Chatterton, there had never, we have reason to think, been any cordiality—would certainly not have listened to such a thing. What! sleep under the same roof with a violent young fellow that had threatened to make away with himself? Find the garret in a welter some morning with the young rascal's blood, and have a coroner's inquest in the house? Better at once give him up his indentures, and be rid of him! With this advice of the old lady even the calmer deliberations of Chatterton's own friends, Barrett, Catcott and the rest, could not but agree. So, on or about Monday the 16th of April 1770, it was intimated to Chatterton that he was no longer in the employment of Mr. Lambert.

Tuesday the 17th, it will be remembered, was the day of Wilkes's release from prison; and on Thursday the 19th—the very day, as we guess, on which the foregoing letter to Mr. Barrett was written—there took place in Bristol that dinner in honour of the patriot at which, according to the announcement in the *Public Advertiser*, the more prominent Liberals of the town were to assemble at 'the Crown, in the

passage from Broad Street to Tower Lane,' to eat their forty-five pounds of meat, drink their forty-five tankards of ale and their forty-five bowls of punch, and smoke their forty-five pipes of tobacco. Were we wrong in fancying that, while those Bristol Wilkesites were making merry in the tavern, Chatterton may have been moodily perambulating the adjacent streets? Shall we be wrong if we fancy, farther, that the story of Mr. Lambert's apprentice and his intended suicide may have been talked over by the happy gentlemen, when, having finished their toasts, they sat down at leisure to their pipes and the remaining punch?

## CHAPTER III

### BOUND FOR LONDON

CAST out of all chance of a livelihood in his native town, there was but one course open to Chatterton: to bid farewell to Bristol and attorneyship, and try what he could do in the great literary mart of London. Sanguine as were his hopes of success, it can have cost him but little thought to make up his mind to this course, if indeed he did not secretly congratulate himself that his recent escapade had ended so agreeably. Probably there was but one thing that stood in the way of an immediate declaration by himself, after the *fracas* was over, that this was the resolution he had come to—the want, namely, of a little money to serve for outfit. No sooner, therefore, was this obstacle removed by the charitable determination of his friends, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Clayfield, the Catcotts, etc., to make a little subscription for him, so as to present him with the parting gift of a few pounds, than the tide of

feeling was turned, and from a state of despondency Chatterton gave way to raptures of unbounded joy. London! London! A few days, and he should have left the dingy quays of abominable Bristol, and should be treading, in the very footsteps of Goldsmith, Garrick, and Johnson, the liberal London streets!

Chatterton remained exactly a week in Bristol after his dismissal from Mr. Lambert's: *i.e.* from the 16th to the 24th of April. A busy week we may suppose that to have been for Mrs. Chatterton and her daughter; so much sewing to be done, so many other little preparations to be made for the poor boy's departure. This dreadful occurrence notwithstanding, and all that idle people are saying about it, do not *they* know him better than anybody else does, and may he not yet, they say to each other, make his way in the world as creditably as any of the best in Bristol? So, in their humble apartments, the widow and her daughter ply their needles, talking of Thomas and his prospects as hopefully as they can.

The subject of their conversation, meanwhile, is generally out, going from street to street, and taking leave of his friends. Barrett, the two Catcotts, Mr. Alcock, Mr. Clayfield, Burgum, Matthew Mease,

and his younger friends, the Carys, Smiths, and Kators—he makes the round of them all, receiving their good wishes, and making arrangements to correspond with them. To less intimate acquaintances, too, met accidentally in the streets, he has to bid a friendly good-bye. Moreover, there are his numerous feminine friends—the Miss Webbs, the Miss Thatchers, the Miss Hills, etc., not to omit that 'female Machiavel,' Miss Rumsey—who have all heard, with more or less concern, that they are about to lose their poet, and are, of course, anxious to see him before he goes. Of some acquaintances of this class, probably the more humble of them, he appears to have taken a kind of collective farewell. Long afterwards, at least, a Mrs. Stephens, the wife of a cabinet-maker in Bristol, used to tell that she remembered, as an incident of her girlhood, Chatterton's 'taking leave of her and some others, on the steps of Redcliffe Church, very cheerfully,' before his going to London. 'At parting, he said he would give them some gingerbread, and went over the way to Mr. Freeling's to buy some.' In connection with which little anecdote we have a mysterious little scrap of document to produce. It has to be prefaced, however, by a remark or two.

A great deal of nonsense has been written on the question of Chatterton's moral character. Naturally resenting the harsh way in which Chalmers and other earlier biographers of Chatterton handled his memory, the writers of some more recent notices have certainly made out, in favour of 'the marvellous boy,' a certificate of good behaviour to which he was not entitled, and for which he would not have thanked them. The evidence on which they have laid most stress in this connection is that of Chatterton's sister, as given by her in her letter to the Rev. Sir Herbert Croft, eight years after Chatterton's death, and published by that gentleman in his singular book, *Love and Madness.* The following is a passage from that touching and simple epistle, spelt as in the original:—

'He wrote one letter to Sir Horace Warlpool; and, except his corrispondence with Miss Rumsey, the girl I have mentioned, I know of no other. He would frequently walk the Colledge Green with the young girls that statedly paraded there to shew their finery. But I realy beleive he was no debauchee (tho some have reported it). the dear unhappy boy had faults enough I saw with concern. he was proud and exceedingly impetious, but that of venality [the writer thought this a fine word for what she meant] he could not be justly accused with. Mrs. Lambert informed me, not 2 months before he left Bristol, he had never

been once found out of the office in the stated hours, as they frequently sent the footman and other servants to see Nor but once stayed out till 11 o'clock: then he had leave, as we entertained some friends at our house at Christmas.'

This very distinct piece of evidence in favour of Chatterton's punctual conduct as an apprentice has been strained into a testimony of much wider significance. A fruitless attempt, we fear! The worth of a sister's assurance that her deceased brother could not be justly accused of 'venality' it is not difficult to estimate; besides which, it is accompanied with the information that the common report was to the contrary, and with the allusion to the habit of 'walking with the girls on the College Green,' whatever that may mean. Then, again, we have the fact that Mr. Barrett, in his remonstrance with him respecting his alarming letter to Mr. Clayfield, attributed his bad state of mind to the influence of bad company. His own allusions, too, scattered through his writings, seem quite decisive, even if we should not take into very special account the almost constant tone which runs through all that portion of his writings that is not in the antique vein,—evidently the productions, as most of those modern pieces are, of a clever boy eager (as boys often are till some real experience of

the heart has made them earnest and silent) to assert his manhood among his compeers by the irreverent freedom of his language. And, after all, have we not the native probabilities of the case itself? Are young men in general, and attorneys' apprentices in particular, usually so immaculate in conduct that it becomes necessary to argue out something like a perfectly virtuous character for Chatterton before venturing to introduce him to the admirers of genius and literature? Should we fail in doing this, will Byron, Burns, and the rest, refuse to shake hands with him? It is a pity, certainly, that one should have to ask such a question. Young men of genius may take warning. A convenient theory of 'wild oats' has been provided and put in circulation for their use by the thoughtless and the interested; but better for themselves in the end if they decidedly reject it. Were Byron and Burns, or were Chatterton himself, to speak now, this would be their advice. Happiest is he who, needing no benefit from the theory, yet can weigh it, and temper his judgments with charity.

And now for our document. If the reader were to go to the Reading-Room of the British Museum and ask for the Chatterton MSS. (a considerable portion of all the surviving MSS. of Chatterton is in the

Museum, the remainder being in Bristol and elsewhere), he would have several volumes brought to him, containing papers and parchments of various shapes and sizes, some stained, smoked, and written like antiques, others undisguisedly modern. If, after overcoming the strange feeling that here in his hands are the very sheets over which so many years ago Chatterton bent, tracing with nimble fingers the black characters over the white pages, the reader should examine the papers successively and individually, he would come upon one that would puzzle him much. It is a dingy piece of letter-paper, once folded as a letter, and containing a very ugly scrawl in an uneducated feminine hand.

Here it is, printed as in the original—

'Sir, I send my Love to you and Tell you This if you prove Constant I not miss but if you frown and Torn away I can make oart of battered Hay pray excep of me Love Hartley an send me word Cartingley. Tell me How maney ouncs of Green Gingerbread Can Sho the baker of Honiste.

'My House is not belt with Stavis. I not be Coarted by Boys nor navis. I Haive a man and a man Shall Haive me, if I whaint a fool I Send for Thee.

'If you are going to the D——I wish you a good Gonery.'

What in all the world have we here? Exercising our utmost ingenuity for the purpose of determining,

if possible, what petty, and perhaps not very reputable, Bristol occurrence of the year 1770, this mystic piece of ill-written doggerel (the reader will observe that part of the letter is in a kind of cripple rhyme) has come down to us to perpetuate and represent, we can honestly arrive but at one conclusion—that it is the spiteful epistle of some obscure female, avenging herself, with all the energy of feminine malice, for the *spretæ injuria formæ* or some other fancied wrong. Did we dare to copy the version of the letter, or rather jocular answer to it, written in Chatterton's own hand on the back of the sheet, in the shape of a few extremely impolite and not at all quotable Hudibrastic lines, the hypothesis would appear inevitable. In short, we explain the matter thus;—Among the various acquaintances of Chatterton interested in the news of his approaching departure is some one of the other sex, labouring under the provocation of some injury, or fancied injury, not now ascertainable. This Bristol Juno sees, with pangs incredible, her faithless Jove dispensing the gingerbread he has bought at 'Mr. Freeling's over the way' among the nymphs waiting for it on the steps of Redcliffe Church; she goes home, and discharges all her malevolence in one fell epistle, into which, with vast literary effort, she contrives to introduce an allusion to the gingerbread;

this epistle, intended to pierce her Jove's heart like a poisoned arrow, she sends to him anonymously; and he, reading it, and recognising the hand of the distempered donor, enjoys the joke amazingly, and expresses his opinion of it and her by scribbling his wicked answer on the other side. Strange bit of defunct real life thus to be dug up again into the light! The departure of poor Chatterton for London from his native place was not, it would thus appear, an event which all Bristol viewed with indifference. Whether the Clayfields, the Barretts, and the Catcotts of his acquaintance cared much about the matter or not, whether Miss Rumsey shed tears or not, we cannot say; but here, at least, was one sluttish denizen of some mean Bristol street in whose breast Chatterton left a rankling sense of wrong or jealousy, and who was powerfully enough excited by the news of his departure to immortalise her concern therein by penning a spiteful letter, in which she told him he was reported to be 'going to the D——,' and wished him a good journey.

Chatterton was not going to the D—— directly: he was only going to London, to follow the professional walk of literature. Persons going on that journey from the provinces now-a-days (and it must

have been the same in Chatterton's time) usually carry three things with them, in addition to the mere essentials of luggage—a little money, a small bundle of MSS., and a few letters of introduction. How was Chatterton furnished in these several respects?

As regards money, the most essential of the three, but very poorly, we fear. It would throw more light than a hundred disquisitions on the real facts of Chatterton's London career were we able to calculate to the precise shilling the sum of money which he took with him from Bristol. Unfortunately, there are no data for such a calculation. All that remains in the shape of information on this point is a vague tradition, the exact worth of which we do not know, that the understood arrangement among the charitable persons who had agreed to get up a little subscription for him against his departure was that they should subscribe a guinea each. Subjecting this tradition to a strict act of judgment, directed by a knowledge of the laws of human nature in general and the circumstances of Chatterton's Bristol position in particular, one may say that the entire sum that could possibly be in Chatterton's purse in the week before he left Bristol did not (any contribution his mother could make included) exceed ten guineas.

Take a more probable estimate still, and deduct the expenses of the outfit and journey, and we may say that Chatterton was elated with the prospect of invading London with a pecuniary force of exactly five guineas.

But he had plenty of manuscripts. In one bundle he had the whole of the Rowley Poems and other antiques—*Ælla*, *The Bristowe Tragedie*, *Goddwyn*, *The Tournament*, *The Battle of Hastings*, *The Parliamente of Sprytes*, etc.,; all written and finished at least twelve months before, and forming matter enough to fill, if printed, one considerable volume. These, if he could either dispose of them in the mass, or sell them individually, would form a sufficient stock to begin with. On *Ælla*, in particular, he naturally set great value. It was his masterpiece, worth a great deal of money even as an imitation of the antique, and worth ten times more if he could succeed in getting it accepted as a genuine English poem of the fifteenth century. If he should not be able to part with it advantageously under either guise, he would at any rate have it by him, to be printed some day or other at his own expense, and to make him famous as a poet and antiquarian! Then, in another bundle, he had his miscellaneous modern pieces in prose and verse—his

*Kew Gardens*, his *Consuliad*, and other such satires after the manner of Pope and Churchill, with numerous songs, elegies, and other poetical trifles, and an assortment of odds and ends bearing on English antiquities. For these he cared far less himself than for his Rowley Poems; but he had already ascertained that they were more disposable as literary ware, and accordingly he had of late almost abandoned the antique vein in their favour. They might be of use to him in his dealings with the magazines and newspapers; and, if they should turn out not to be exactly suitable, he had a ready pen, and a head full of all kinds of historical knowledge, and should find no difficulty—especially after his sister had forwarded to him his little collection of books—in throwing off such papers by the dozen!

Lastly, as regards the matter of introductions. It may seem strange to such as are accustomed to think such things essential to a young man migrating from his native place, but we positively cannot find that Chatterton took one letter of introduction from Bristol with him. That Matthew Mease may have told him of some vintner of his acquaintance, living somewhere in Whitechapel, that would be glad to see him if he told him he knew Mat Mease of

Bristol; that Mr. Clayfield, or Mr. Barrett, or even his master, Mr. Lambert, may have recommended him to call at his leisure on certain well-to-do Smiths or Robinsons they had dealings with; that his younger friends, the Mr. Carys and Mr. Rudhalls and Miss Rumseys and Miss Webbs, may have given him commissions and instructions destined to bring him into connection with metropolitan aunts living in Camden Town, and long-forgotten cousins that had situations in the Custom House; nay, that Mrs. Chatterton herself, taxing, with the grandmother's help, her genealogical memory, may have excogitated for the occasion a stray relative or two in London that it might be well to visit: all this is, of course, extremely probable. But (and the reason, in all likelihood, was that his whole circle of acquaintance could not muster such a thing) not a single letter to a literary notability did this 'mad genius' of Bristol, going on his expedition to set the Thames on fire, take in his portmanteau to be of use to him. Two things only seem to have been decided: first, that, on arriving in London, he should go to lodge at the house of a Mr. Walmsley, a plasterer in Shoreditch, where a Mrs. Ballance, a distant relative of his mother's, and who had already been written to on the subject, resided; and, secondly, that his care on

his arrival should be to seek out Mr. Edmunds at the *Middlesex Journal* office in Shoe Lane, and beat up the editorial quarters of the *Town and Country Magazine*. These were to be his *foci* in London; and thence, by the force of his genius, he was to weave out new acquaintanceships, and spread himself in all directions! Nor, on the whole, was this plan perhaps the worst. Young authors coming to set the Thames on fire are by no means always welcome visitors to those more elderly practitioners of the same craft who, having become convinced by experience of the incombustibility of the river, have settled down on its banks with chastened hopes and more practical intentions; and it is better in the long run for young authors themselves to purchase every inch of way they make into people's good graces by some equivalent addition of new work done and tendered. And yet who will say that introductions are of no use? The kind word of encouragement spoken now and then by the veteran *littérateur* to his younger brother, the business note written now and then in his service when anything in the shape of work turns up, the friendly invitation now and then when a few of the same craft are to meet: these courtesies, which it is in the power of introductions, in the proportion perhaps of one

effective to ten given, to procure—how much wear and tear of heart may they not save, how many paths through poverty to a rank London churchyard may they not make smoother! These, a little extended and adjusted, would of themselves constitute in these days, and while more systematic promises are in abeyance, a very good organisation of literature. Nor, thank God, are these wanting. That hard, austere man of letters, young poet, who receives you so grimly, is so severe on your fallacies and commonplaces, says not a word to flatter you, and would almost drive you from literature to making shoes, let but an opportunity really to serve you present itself, and you shall find that man as true as steel and as kind as a woman! That other man of letters, with the flashing wit and the impetuosity that stuns and blasts you, I could tell you of generous actions done by him! And him, again, the broad, sagacious man of abundant humour and encyclopædic lore, or him on whose silver hairs the honours of a long celebrity sit so gracefully—what debts of gratitude, were they reckoned up, would be found owing by contemporaries to them! Such men there are in London in our own days, each cordial and assisting after his own method and in his own sphere; nor was London wanting in such in the days of Chatterton. Remem-

bering this, and thinking which special man out of the 700,000 and odd souls then inhabiting London it might have been best for Chatterton to have come into connection with, one cannot but speculate what might have been the result had Chatterton taken with him from Bristol but one letter of introduction, addressed to Oliver Goldsmith. 'To Dr. Goldsmith, at No. 2 Brick Court, Middle Temple, favoured by Mr. Chatterton'—one lingers in fancy over the probable consequences of a letter bearing that superscription. But it did not so happen.

It was on Tuesday, the 24th of April, and, as near as we can guess, between eight and nine in the evening, that Chatterton, who had probably never been a single whole day out of Bristol before, took his final farewell of it. By the help of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April 1771, which contains a register of the weather for the same month in the previous year, we are able to tell pretty exactly the state of the weather at the time. Monday, the 23rd., had been 'a cloudy day, very cold, with some little hail and a strong north-west wind;' and on Tuesday, the 24th, though the wind had veered round to the south-west, it was still 'cold and cloudy.' On the evening of that cloudy day, when it is already

almost dark, and the streets are damp with approaching rain, three figures stand at an inn door in Bristol, waiting for the starting of the London coach. They are—Chatterton, wrapped up for his journey, a tight, well-built youth, of middle size; his sister, a grown young woman, two years older than himself; and his mother, a sad-looking elderly person, in a cloak. Round about the coach, and greatly in the way of the porters, who are putting on the luggage, are one or two young men that have gone there to bid Chatterton once more good-bye. They stand and talk for a few minutes in the midst of the bustle, while the passengers are hurrying backwards and forwards between the coach and the lighted passage of the inn. At last all is ready; the luggage is put up, and the other passengers have taken their seats. 'Good-bye, Tom; God bless you; and mind to write as soon as you get to London, falters the widow for the last time. Tom hears her; bids her good-bye, his sister good-bye, the rest good-bye; and springs into his place in what was then called 'the basket' of the coach, *i.e.*, an exterior accommodation slung low down to the body. 'All right,' cries the guard, and blows his horn; the coachman cracks his whip, the horses' hoofs clatter; and away along the ill-lit streets goes the

clumsy vehicle, out towards the suburbs of Bristol, Chatterton slung in the basket. The widow stands at the inn door watching it till it disappears; then, taking her daughter's arm, and gathering her cloak around her, walks home with a heavy heart through the drizzle.

# PART II

# LONDON

# CHAPTER I

## SHOREDITCH

READER, were you ever in Shoreditch? If you are an inhabitant of London, you may know all about it; if not, get a map of London, and you will see that the locality named Shoreditch forms part of one of the great highways leading northwards from the centre of the city towards the suburbs. The part of this highway nearest the city, including about half a mile of houses on both sides, is called Bishopsgate Street, from the fact that here stood one of the ancient gates of the city, erected by a Saxon bishop of some early century; beyond that for about a quarter of a mile, the thoroughfare is called Norton Folgate, or, as it was originally pronounced, the Northern Foldgate; after which, extending for another quarter of a mile, and terminating in Hackney, is Shoreditch proper, the principal street of a populous parish of the same name. Tradition ascribes the origin of the name to the circumstance

that Jane Shore, the mistress of Edward IV., ended her life here—

> 'Within a ditch of loathsome scent,
> Which carrion dogs did much frequent,'

as the ballad says: but old Stow settles that matter by saying he could prove by record that as early as four hundred years before his time the place had been called Soersditch. However this may be, the place deserves, or till recently did deserve, its name. There is, indeed, no very obvious vestige of a ditch now thereabouts, whatever a more strict investigation might disclose; but the neighbourhood has not, on the whole, a very attractive look. The aspect which Shoreditch proper now presents is that of a broad, bustling street of old-fronted houses, full of heterogeneous shops, some of them exhibiting considerable displays of cheap hats, haberdashery, shoes, ready-made clothes, and groceries, but others belonging rather to the costermonger species. Narrower streets, of more mean appearance, branch out from it on both sides. Altogether, Shoreditch is not the part of London where a literary man of the present day would voluntarily seek lodgings; and the case was probably much the same in Chatterton's time. Indeed, long before that, Shoreditch, partly perhaps on account of the peculiar suggestive-

ness of its name, had obtained an unenviable reputation as a low neighbourhood. 'To die in Shoreditch' was synonymous, in the writings of the wits of Dryden's time, with dying like a profligate and having hags for one's nurses.

It was here, however, that Chatterton lodged when he first came to London. We have already mentioned that the only definite arrangement he seems to have made for his sojourn in London, before leaving Bristol, consisted in his having written to Mrs. Ballance, a distant relative of his mother, who lived in the house of a Mr. Walmsley, a plasterer, in Shoreditch, asking her to secure a lodging for him against his arrival. Mrs. Ballance, whom we picture as an elderly woman, the widow of some seafaring man, living in London in a meagre, eleemosynary way, appears to have replied to this letter by writing to Mrs. Chatterton that Thomas had better come at once to Mr. Walmsley's, where he could be accommodated in the meantime at least, and where she would do her best to make him comfortable.

Accordingly, it was to Mr. Walmsley's in Shoreditch that Chatterton, on his arrival in London, on the evening of Wednesday the 25th of April 1770, contrived to make his way. Where the Bristol

coach of that day stopped we do not know, though even that might be ascertained if one were very curious about it; but, as it must have been in the yard of some inn near the heart of the City, Chatterton had not far to go before introducing himself to Mrs. Ballance, if, indeed, the good woman did not make her appearance at the coach to meet her young relative. It shows the impatience and the spirit of the young stranger thus deposited in the streets of London that, late as it was when he arrived at Mr. Walmsley's (it must have been between five and six o'clock in the evening), and tired as he must have been with his twenty hours' journey, he did not remain long within doors, but, having seen his boxes safe, and escaped the assiduities of Mrs. Ballance, sallied out for a ramble, and to make calls on the persons through whose patronage he hoped to gain a footing in literary circles. So much, at least, we infer from the following letter to his mother, written on the morning of the 26th, after he had slept his first night at Mr. Walmsley's, and giving an account of his journey and his first proceedings in London—

'LONDON, *April* 26, 1770

DEAR MOTHER,—Here I am, safe and in high spirits. To give you a journal of my tour would not be unneces-

sary. After riding in the basket to Brislington, I mounted the top of the coach, and rid easy, and was agreeably entertained with the conversation of a Quaker *in dress*, but little so in personals and behaviour. This laughing Friend, who is a carver, lamented his having sent his tools to Worcester, as otherwise he would have accompanied me to London. I left him at Bath; when, finding it rained pretty fast, I entered an inside passenger to Speenhamland, the half-way stage, paying seven shillings. 'Twas lucky I did so, for it snowed all night, and on Marlborough Downs the snow was near a foot high.

'At seven in the morning I breakfasted at Speenhamland, and then mounted the coach-box for the remainder of the day, which was a remarkable fine one. Honest Gee-ho complimented me with assuring me that I sat bolder and tighter than any person who ever rid with him. Dined at Stroud most luxuriously with a young gentleman, who had slept all the preceding night in the machine, and an old mercantile genius, whose schoolboy son had a great deal of wit, as the father thought, in remarking that Windsor was as old as *our Saviour's time*.

'Got into London about five o'clock in the evening. Called upon Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Fell, Mr. Hamilton, and Mr. Dodsley. Great encouragement from them; all approved of my design. Shall soon be settled. Call upon Mr. Lambert; show him this; or tell him, if I deserve a recommendation, he would oblige me to give me one: if I do not, it will be beneath him to take notice of me. Seen all aunts, cousins—all well—and I am welcome. Mr. T. Wensley is alive, and coming home. Sister, grandmother, etc., remember.—I remain your dutiful son, T. CHATTERTON.'

It is a curious corroboration of Chatterton's

account of the weather during his journey that in the meteorological registers of the *Gentleman's Magazine* Wednesday the 25th of April 1770—the day on which Chatterton sat beside the driver of the Bristol coach all the way from Speenhamland to London—is entered as a day of 'smart frost, very bright and very cold,' snow having fallen in some parts of the country during the previous night. It was on the evening of this bright, cold day, therefore (or, notwithstanding the wording of his letter, was it not rather next morning?), that Chatterton, setting out from Mr. Walmsley's, contrived, by inquiring his way of people he met, to pilot himself along Shoreditch, Norton Folgate, and Bishopsgate Street, towards the City, bent as he was on calling without delay on the four publishers mentioned in his letter—Mr. Edmunds, Mr. Fell, Mr. Hamilton, and Mr. Dodsley. Let us see if we can make out anything respecting those gentlemen. They were the first persons Chatterton visited in London, and some of them had not a little to do with his subsequent fate.

Mr. Edmunds has been already introduced to the reader. He was the proprietor, editor, and publisher of the *Middlesex Journal*, a bi-weekly newspaper, to which, we have seen, Chatterton had sent

several communications from Bristol. His offices were in Shoe Lane, Holborn.——Of Mr. Hamilton we learn something from that interesting collection of scraps, Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*. He was the printer and proprietor of the *Town and Country Magazine*; in which capacity Chatterton had, as we know, for some time corresponded with him. He was the son of one Archibald Hamilton, a Scotsman who, having been obliged to quit Edinburgh in 1736 for having been actively concerned in the Porteous Riot, had settled in London as a printer, and had made a considerable fortune. The son of this Archibald, enjoying the benefit of his father's connection, had also set up as a printer. He had, says Nichols, two printing-offices, one 'in the country, on the road between Highgate and Finchley,' the other in town, 'near St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell'; and it was probably in allusion to this circumstance that, when he started a new magazine, in the beginning of 1769, he named it the *Town and Country Magazine*. The magazine, Nichols informs us, had 'a prodigious sale.'——Nichols also gives us some particulars respecting Dodsley, in addition to those already communicated to the reader. Having succeeded his brother Robert,

whose junior he was by twenty-two years, in the year 1759, James Dodsley had carried on the bookselling business in Pall Mall so profitably as to be already a wealthy man. When he died in 1797, he left a fortune of £70,000; and a good part of this sum must have been accumulated before 1770, when he was forty-five years of age. 'By a habit of excluding himself from the world,' says Nichols, 'Mr. James Dodsley, who certainly possessed a liberal heart and a strong understanding, had acquired many peculiarities.' One of these is mentioned as specially characteristic. 'He kept a carriage many years, but studiously wished his friends should not know it; nor did he ever use it on the eastern side of Temple Bar.' The inscription on the tablet erected to the memory of the bookseller in St. James's Church, Westminster, where he was buried, is to the same effect. 'He was a man,' says the epitaph, 'of a retired and contemplative turn of mind, though engaged in a very extensive line of public business; he was upright and liberal in his dealings, a friend to the afflicted in general, and to the poor of this parish in particular,'—in fact, an eccentric, shy, good sort of man.——Finally, what of Mr. Fell? From what Chatterton says of him, we learn that he was printer, publisher, and editor

of the *Freeholder's Magazine*, a periodical conducted in the interest of Wilkes, to which, as well as to the *Town and Country*, Chatterton had recently sent articles for insertion.[1] We imagine him to have been a needy, nondescript kind of publisher, with a place of business in Paternoster Row, and not so respectable as either Edmunds or Hamilton, not to speak of Dodsley.

Such were the four persons upon whom we are to imagine the impetuous young fellow who had just come off the Bristol coach dropping in unexpectedly long, long ago. His hopes from Edmunds were, of course, chiefly in connection with the *Middlesex Journal*. Through Fell he might strengthen his footing in the *Freeholder's Magazine*, and have access to whatever else might be going on under the auspices of Wilkes. From Hamilton he looked for further employment on the *Town and Country*. From Dodsley his expectations were probably still higher. Besides being the publisher of the *Annual Register*, Dodsley was a bookseller on a large scale, and a publisher of poetry; it was to him that Chatterton had applied by letter sixteen

[1] From a note in the Aldine Edition of Chatterton's works (1875), I find that his satirical poem called *The Consuliad* had appeared in the *Freeholder's Magazine* for January 1770, signed 'C.,' and dated 'Bristol, Jan. 4, 1770.'

months before as a likely person to publish his *Ælla*; one or two letters had probably passed between them since; and, in resolving to introduce himself personally to this magnate of books, Chatterton had, doubtless, dreams not only of the opening of the *Annual Register* to his casual scribblings, but also of the appearance of his Rowley performances some day or other in the form of one or more well printed volumes, the wonder of all the critics.—It was with these views on the persons severally concerned that Chatterton made his four rapid calls. The enterprise was certainly less Quixotic than if a young literary provincial now-a-days were, on the first day of his being in London, to call on Murray or Longman or Messrs. Macmillan, then to beat up the office of the *Daily News* in search of the editor, after that to seek an interview with the editor of *The Fortnightly*, and finally to go and see what could be done on the *Illustrated News* or the *Graphic*. Still, with all allowance for the difference between that day and this, the idea of achieving interviews with four different editors and publishers in one ramble was somewhat bold. As regards mere time and distance, to compass calls, in such circumstances, on four different persons—one of them living in Shoe Lane, another at St. John's Gate,

Clerkenwell, a third in Pall Mall, and the fourth somewhere else—can have been no easy task. But Chatterton was a resolute youth, with plenty of the faculty of self-assertion, and capable, as we imagine, not only of making four calls in one walk, but also of going through each without any unnecessary degree of bashfulness. We have no doubt that he saw Hamilton, Fell, Edmunds, and Dodsley himself, with the most perfect self-assurance; that he explained his case to them, and stated what he wanted from them, very distinctly; and that, with the advantage he had in having corresponded with all of them before, he came off from the interviews in a satisfactory manner. As to how they received him, and what they said to him, we have but his own words to his mother—'Great encouragement from them; all approved of my design.' The meaning of this is somewhat problematical. Dodsley, we imagine, nervous and shy person as he was, may have been a little discomposed by the talk of the impetuous young visitor who had so unceremoniously burst in upon him, and, while listening with tolerable courtesy to what he said, may have been mentally resolving to have nothing more to do with that odd Bristol lad, if once he could get him out. Hamilton and Edmunds, we fancy, were civil

and general, with perhaps an intention to let the lad write for them, if he chose to do so. Fell, as a needier man, and more ready to catch at a promising literary recruit, was probably the most cordial of all.

And so, tired and happy, the young stranger bent his steps homewards in the direction of Shoreditch. Ah! one wonders whether, in passing along Shoe Lane after his interview with Edmunds, brushing with his shoulder the ugly black wall of that workhouse burying-ground on the site of which Farringdon Market now stands, any presentiment occurred to him of a spectacle which, four short months afterwards, that very spot was to witness—those young limbs of his, *now* so full of life, *then* closed up stark and unclaimed in a workhouse shell, and borne carelessly and irreverently by one or two men along that very wall to a pauper's hasty grave! No, he paces all unwittingly, poor young heart, that spot of his London doom, where even now, remembering him, one shudders as one walks. God, in his mercy, hangs the veil.

In what precise part of Shoreditch that house of Mr. Walmsley was in which Chatterton lodged when he first came to London, and to which, on that

memorable day, he returned through many dark and strange streets, we do not know. London Directories of the year 1770 are not things easy to be found; and, could we find one, we should not be very likely to find Mr. Walmsley's name in it. In these circumstances, the literary antiquary, as he walks along Shoreditch, may be allowed to single out, as the object of his curiosity, any old-looking house he pleases along the whole length of the thoroughfare on either side, it being stipulated only that the house so selected shall be conceivable as having once been the abode of a plasterer. For our part, we have an incommunicable impression as if the house were to be sought in the close vicinity of the terminus of the Eastern Counties Railway, or where Shoreditch passes into Norton Folgate. Let that fancy stand, therefore, in lieu of a better.

Here, then, Chatterton slept his first night in London. Here, on the following morning, he breakfasted in the company of his relative, Mrs. Ballance, giving her the news of Bristol, and receiving from her such bits of news in return as she had to communicate, including the intelligence that Mr. T. Wensley—a seaman or petty officer, as we learn from a subsequent allusion, on board a King's ship, but a native of Bristol, and

on that account known to the Chatterton family—was alive, and on his way home. Hence also he sets out to visit those aunts and cousins mentioned in the letter as being all well and glad to see him,—who, it is to be hoped, did not live far from Shoreditch. Here, some time or other in the course of the day—Thursday, the 26th, his first real day in London, and 'a very coarse, wet, cold day' it was, says the *Gentleman's Magazine*—he writes his letter home, so as to send it by that day's post. And here, during the remaining days of that month—Friday, the 27th, 'a very coarse, wet day, but not so cold'; Saturday, the 28th, 'a heavy morning, bright afternoon, cold wind'; Sunday, the 29th, 'a very bright day, hot sun, cold wind'; and Monday, the 30th, 'chiefly bright, flying clouds, no rain and warm';—he soon finds himself fairly domiciled, becoming more familiar with the Walmsleys and Mrs. Ballance, whom he sees in the mornings, and starting off every forenoon for a walk, along Norton Folgate and Bishopsgate Street, towards those quarters of the metropolis where the chief attractions lay.

Chatterton lived in Mr. Walmsley's house in Shoreditch about six weeks in all, or from the 24th of April to the beginning of June. We are

fortunately able to give a somewhat particular account of the economy of Mr. Walmsley's family, and of the kind of accommodation which Chatterton had there, and the impression he made on the various members of it during his stay. The Rev. Sir Herbert Croft, already mentioned as one who took much pains—more pains, in fact, than anybody else from that time to this—to inform himself of the real particulars of Chatterton's life, hunted out the Walmsley family in Shoreditch while the memory of Chatterton was still fresh, and ascertained all he could from them regarding the habits of the singular being whose brief stay among them had been an event of such consequence in the history of their humble household. The following is an extract from Sir Herbert's *Love and Madness*, embodying all that he could gather about Chatterton from this source—

'The man and woman where he first lodged are still [1780] living in the same house. He is a plasterer. They, and their nephew and niece (the latter about as old as Chatterton would be now, the former three years younger), and Mrs. Ballance—who lodged in the house and desired them to let Chatterton, her relation, live there also—have been seen. The little collected from them you shall have in their own words . . .

'Mrs. Ballance says he was as proud as Lucifer. He very soon quarrelled with her for calling him "Cousin

Tommy," and asked her if she ever heard of a poet's being called *Tommy*; but she assured him that she knew nothing of poets, and only wished he would not set up for a gentleman. Upon her recommending it to him to get into some office, when he had been in town two or three weeks, he stormed about the room like a madman, and frightened her not a little by telling her that he hoped, with the blessing of God, very soon to be sent prisoner to the Tower, which would make his fortune. He would often look steadfastly in a person's face, without speaking or seeming to see the person, for a quarter of an hour or more, till it was quite frightful; during all which time (she supposes from what she has since heard) his thoughts were gone about something else. . . . He frequently declared that he should settle the nation before he had done; but how could she think that her poor cousin Tommy was so great a man as she now finds he was? His mother should have written word of his greatness, and then, to be sure, she would have humoured the gentleman accordingly.

'Mr. Walmsley observed little in him, but that there was something manly and pleasing about him, and that he did not dislike the wenches.

'Mrs. Walmsley's account is, that she never saw any harm of him—that he never *mislisted* her, but was always very civil whenever they met in the house by accident; that he would never suffer the room in which he used to read and write to be swept, because, he said, poets hated brooms; that she told him she did not know anything poet-folks were good for, but to sit in a dirty cap and gown in a garret, and at last to be starved; that, during the nine (?) weeks he was at her house, he never stayed out after the family hours except once, when he did not come home all night, and had been, she heard, *poeting* a song about the streets. (This night, Mrs. Ballance says,

she knows he lodged at a relation's, because Mr. Walmsley's house was shut up when he came home.)

'The niece says, for her part, she always took him more for a mad boy than anything else, he would have such flights and *vagaries*; that, but for his face, and her knowledge of his age, she should never have thought him a boy, he was so manly, and *so much himself*; that no women came after him, nor did she know of any connection —but still that he was a sad rake, and terribly fond of women, and would sometimes be saucy to her; that he ate what he chose to have with his relation Mrs. Ballance, who lodged in the house; but that he never touched meat, and drank only water, and seemed to live on the air. . . . The niece adds that he was good-tempered, and agreeable, and obliging, but sadly proud and haughty: nothing was too good for him; nor was anything to be too good for his grandmother, mother, and sister, hereafter. . . . That he used to sit up almost all night, reading and writing; and that her brother said he was afraid to lie with him —for, to be sure, he was a *spirit*, and never slept; for he never came to bed till it was morning, and then, for what he saw, never closed his eyes.

'The nephew (Chatterton's bed-fellow during the first six weeks he lodged there) says that, notwithstanding his pride and haughtiness, it was impossible to help liking him; that he lived chiefly upon a bit of bread, or a tart, and some water—but he once or twice saw him take a sheep's tongue out of his pocket; that Chatterton, to his knowledge, never slept while they lay together; that he never came to bed till very late, sometimes three or four o'clock, and was always awake when he (the nephew) waked, and got up at the same time, about five or six; that almost every morning the floor was covered with pieces of paper not so big as six-pences, into which he had torn what he had been writing before he came to bed.

Bating some spitefulness in the recollection of Chatterton's haughty airs, apparent in the evidence of Mrs. Ballance and the niece, and a slight tendency to the marvellous apparent in that of the nephew (who was but a boy of fourteen when Chatterton shared the room with him), the above presents, we believe, a picture of Chatterton, as he appeared in the narrow Walmsley circle, as accurate as it is vivid. Walmsley himself one rather likes. One fancies him an easy sort of fellow, not troubling himself much about domestic matters, going out to his work in the morning, and leaving his lodger to the care of the women-folk. After he is gone, we are to suppose, Chatterton spends the morning in reading and writing, while Mrs. Walmsley, Mrs. Ballance, and the niece are slatterning about the house; and generally, as the forenoon advances, he goes out for his walk towards the places of London resort. Along Norton Folgate and Bishopsgate Street, passing crowds of people and hackney-coaches, and glancing, with the eye of an antiquarian and a connoisseur in architecture, at such buildings of antique aspect as are or then were conspicuous in that thoroughfare—the old church of St. Helen's, the old church of St. Ethelburga, and that much-admired remnant of the civic architecture of the fifteenth

century, Crosby Hall, or Crosby Place, mentioned in Shakespeare's Richard III.: so the metropolitan reader, if he desires to be exact, may follow Chatterton in his daily walks from Mr. Walmsley's in Shoreditch. For the rest, his wanderings may be various: frequently, of course, along the main line of Cornhill, past the Bank, as it then was, and the then new Mansion House, into Cheapside; thence slowly along the purlieus of St. Paul's, with a peculiar lingering among the bookshops of Paternoster Row; and, further, down Ludgate Hill and up Fleet Street, towards Temple Bar and the Strand. Visits of business were, we may be sure, not neglected; and, in achieving his transits from one place to another, Chatterton, like the rest of us, may have been guilty of the folly of attempting short cuts, and so have bewildered himself in mazes of mean streets, proving their populousness by swarms of children, yet never to be seen by him, or by anybody else, more than once.

Oh, the weariness of those aimless walks of a young literary adventurer, without purse or friend, in the streets of London! The perpetual and anxious thought within, which scarcely any street-distraction can amuse; the listlessness with which, on coming to the parting of two ways, one suffers the least accident

to determine which way one will take, both being indifferent; the vain castle-building in sanguine moments, when thousands of pounds seem possible and near; the utter prostration of spirit at other moments, when one inspects the shivering beggar that passes with new interest as but another form of one's self, and when every glimpse of a damp, grassless churchyard through a railing acts as a horrible premonition of what may be the end; the curious and habitual examination of physiognomies met as one goes along; the occasional magic of a bright eye, or a lovely form, shooting a pang through the heart, and calling up, it may be, the image of a peerless one, distant, denied, but unforgotten, till the soul melts in very tenderness, and all the past is around one again; the sudden start from such a mood, the flush, the clenched hand, the set teeth, the resolve, the manly hope, the dream of a home quiet and blest after all with one sweet presence: and then, after that, the more composed gait, and the saunter towards the spots one prefers, till the waning day, or the need to work and eat, brings one back fatigued to the lonely room! And so from day to day a repetition of the same process. Ah, London, London! thou perpetual home of a shifting multitude, how many a soul there is within thee at this hour, who, listening

to that peculiar roar of thine, which shows the concourse of myriads in thee, and yet feeling excluded, like an unclaimed atom, from the midst of thy bustle, might cry aloud to thee, 'I, too, am strong; I am young; I am willing; I can do something; leave me not out; attend to me; make room for me; devise the means of absorbing me, and such as me, within thy just activity; and defer not till I and they make thee hearken with our shrieks!' But London rolls on; and men, young and old, do demand impossible things. If it is impossible to make the medium without conform, some power is at least left to shape and rule the spirit within.

Chatterton, we believe, came to London with as practical and resolute a spirit as any literary adventurer before or since. His excitement with his change of position, his confidence in being able to make his way, and his activity in availing himself of every means of doing so, seem to have been really prodigious. Hence, probably, his first walks in London were as little listless as was possible in the circumstances. Instead of idle and aimless saunterings, such as we have described, many of his London walks during the first week or two of his stay at Shoreditch must have been direct visits from spot to spot, and from person to person. By

no means diffident or bashful, and, so far as we can see, perfectly heart-whole in respect of all the Bristol beauties he had left, he probably wasted less time than many others with less genius would have wasted in useless regrets and pointless reveries. Compared with his life at Bristol, where he had been the miserable drudge of a lawyer's office, his present life, now that he was a rover in London, appeared to him, doubtless, all but paradisaic. To work in the morning in his lodging in Shoreditch, with sometimes a saucy word for his landlady's niece; then to go out to make calls, and see sights in various quarters, buying a tart at a pastrycook's for his dinner, spending a shilling or two in other little purchases, and quite alive always to the distraction of a pretty face wherever he chanced to be; then to come home again at an earlier or a later hour, and to sit up half the night writing and tearing papers, greatly to the bewilderment and alarm of that very ill-used boy, Master Walmsley: here was happiness, here was liberty, here was a set of conditions in which to begin the process of setting fire to the Thames! So, at least, it seemed to Chatterton himself during his first fortnight in London; for, when Mrs. Ballance, at the end of that period, ventured to suggest that he should try to get into some office, we have seen

what thanks the poor woman got. To be sure, had Mrs. Chatterton sent her word beforehand what a great man Cousin Tommy was, she would have humoured the gentleman accordingly! But how was she to know? Ah, how indeed?

## CHAPTER II

### TOWN TALK LONG AGO

IN coming to London, Chatterton, of course, came into the midst of all the politics and current talk of the day. Bristol, indeed, as a bustling and mercantile place, had had its share of interest in the general on-goings of the nation; and regularly, as the coach had brought down the last new materials of gossip from London, the politicians of Bristol had gone through the budget, and given the Bristol *imprimatur*, or the reverse, to the opinions pronounced by the metropolitan authorities. Sometimes, too, Bristol, from its western position and its extensive shipping connections, might have the start even of London in a bit of American news. On the whole, however, going from Bristol to London was like going from darkness into light, from the suburbs to the centre, from the shilling gallery to the pit-stalls. Let us see what were the pieces (small enough they seem now)

in course of performance on the stage of British life when Chatterton had thus just shifted his place in the theatre—in other words, what were the topics which afforded matter of talk to that insatiable gossip, the Town, towards the end of April, and during the whole of May, 1770.

First, monopolising nearly the whole ground of the domestic politics of the time, was the everlasting case of Wilkes and Liberty, begun seven years before, when Chatterton was a boy at Colston's School, but still apparently far from a conclusion There had been a change, however, in the relative situations of the parties.

Amongst the most earnest defenders of Wilkes and advocates of the right of free election were the authorities of the Corporation of the City of London, then under the mayoralty of the celebrated Beckford. With other corporations and public bodies, they had sent in petitions to the King on the subject. These petitions having been ungraciously received, Beckford and his colleagues had had the boldness to wait on the King (March 14th) and address a personal remonstrance to him. The King's reply was as follows—

'I shall always be ready to receive the requests and to listen to the complaints of my subjects; but it gives me

great concern to find that any of them should have been so far misled as to offer me an address and remonstrance the contents of which I cannot but consider as disrespectful to me, injurious to my parliament, and irreconcilable to the principles of the constitution.'

Having read this speech, the King gave the Lord Mayor and others of the deputation his hand to kiss; after which, as they were withdrawing, he turned round to his courtiers and laughed. 'Nero fiddled whilst Rome was burning,' was the grandiloquent remark of Parson Horne on the occasion; and, though this was a little too strong, it is certain that the city people were very angry. So, out of revenge, and partly as a compensation to Wilkes for his exclusion from the House of Commons, they made Wilkes an alderman. The patriot had hardly been out of prison a week when, on 24th of April—the day on which Chatterton left Bristol—he was sworn in as alderman for the ward of Farringdon Without and received a magnificent banquet on the occasion. This accession of Wilkes to the Corporation of the City of London was not only a defiance to the Court and the ruling party; it was also intended to increase the power of the City to annoy those enemies in future. With such a man as Beckford for mayor, and with such men as Wilkes, Sawbridge, Townshend, and Crosby on

the bench of aldermen—all popular men and of strong liberal opinions—what might the Corporation not do?

The same part which was being acted in the City by Lord Mayor Beckford and his colleagues was acted within the more important sphere of Parliament by the Opposition in both Houses. The Parliament of that session had been opened on the 9th of January, and it was to be prorogued on the 19th of May. The case of Wilkes had been before it from first to last, so that it had discussed little else. Uniting in this case, and making it the ground of a common antagonism to the Court and the Ministry, the various elements of the Opposition had constituted themselves into a powerful phalanx, the leaders of which in the one House were Lord Chatham, the Marquis of Rockingham, the Dukes of Richmond, Portland, and Devonshire, and Lords Shelburne and Temple, and in the other House Edmund Burke, Colonel Barré, George Grenville, and others. It was 'Wilkes, Wilkes,' with those men every day of the session,—whenever, in fact, they wished to have a wrestling-match with the Ministers. Thus, on the very first day of the session, Chatham had made a motion on the subject in the House of Lords; on which occasion, to

the surprise of everybody, Lord Chancellor Camden seceded from his colleagues, and expressed his disapprobation of their policy. He was forthwith deprived of the seals, and the Lord Chancellorship went a-begging. Then followed, as we know, the resignation of the premiership by the Duke of Grafton, and the formation of a second edition of the same cabinet under Lord North. It was in this unpopular North administration of 1770 that young Charles Fox, then the greatest rake and gambler about town, first took office as a junior lord of the Admiralty; and the earliest parliamentary displays of this future chief of the Whigs were in the cause of that very policy to the denunciation and destruction of which he afterwards devoted his life. Many were the gibes against this young orator of the North party, whose abilities were already recognised, and whose swarthy complexion and premature corpulence (he was only twenty-one when the wits nicknamed him Niger Fox the Fat) made him a good butt for personal attacks; and a caricature of the day is still extant, with the title of 'The Death of the Foxes,' in which Lord Holland, as the old fox, and his son Charles, as the young one, are represented hanging from a gallows, while Farmer Bull and his wife are rejoicing over their emancipated poultry. Fox was, of course,

no friend to Wilkes; and, in the lower House, it devolved on him to resist the motions of Burke and Barré in Wilkes's case. It was in the House of Lords, however, that the agitation on that case was chiefly kept up. Among the most decisive measures of the Opposition was a renewed motion of Chatham's in that house on the 1st of May—that is, some days after Wilkes's release and promotion to the dignity of alderman—'to appeal and rescind the resolutions of the House of Commons in regard to the expulsion and incapacitation of Mr. Wilkes.' There was a stormy debate, in which the principal speakers were, on the one side, the Duke of Richmond, Lord Chatham, Lord Lyttelton, Lord Camden, Lord Shelburne, and Lord Stanhope, and, on the other, the Duke of Grafton, Lord Denbigh, Lord Mansfield, Lord Egmont, Lord Pomfret, Lord Weymouth, and Lord Gower. The motion was lost by a majority of eighty-nine against forty-three votes. If one may judge from the following paragraph in the *London Evening News* of May the 8th, the excitement in town, in the week following this motion, must have been even greater than usual—

'*Tuesday, May 8th.*—Yesterday a great number of people assembled in the lobby of the House of Commons and the avenues adjoining, in consequence of a report which had

been spread that Mr. Alderman Wilkes intended to go thither that day to claim a seat. The crowd was so great that members were hindered from passing and repassing; whereupon the gallery was ordered to be locked and the lobby to be cleared. But Mr. Wilkes did not go to the House.'

As Parliament was prorogued on the 19th of May, there was an end, for that season, to all parliamentary discussion of the case of Wilkes. Members, to use the words of Junius, 'retired into summer quarters to rest from the disgraceful labours of the campaign'; and Wilkes had to be content with sitting on the bench as an alderman, and organising, with Beckford, Sawbridge, and the rest of the city-folk, a new deputation to gall the King. One of the most famous incidents of the time was the interview of this deputation with the King on the 23rd of May, an interview which was not procured without difficulty. The deputation having been introduced into the royal presence, the Lord Mayor, Beckford, read a 'humble remonstrance' to his Majesty—with as much spice in it, however, as the form of such documents allowed—on the decisive terms in which he had been pleased to characterise their address and petition of the 14th of March. The King was implored to 'break through all the secret and visible machinations to which the City

of London had owed its late severe repulse,' and to 'disclaim the malignant and pernicious advice' which had induced him to meet the former deputation with so sharp an answer: 'an advice of most dangerous tendency, inasmuch as thereby the exercise of the clearest rights of the subject—namely, to petition the King for redress of grievances, to complain of the violation of the freedom of election, to pray dissolution of parliament, to point out malpractices in administration, and to urge the removal of evil ministers—hath, by the generality of one compendious word, been indiscriminately checked with reprimand.' No sooner had the King heard this than, facing Beckford in a way that showed his natural obstinacy, he read the following answer—

'I should have been wanting to the public, as well as to myself, if I had not expressed my dissatisfaction at the late address. My sentiments on that subject continue the same; and I should ill deserve to be considered as the Father of my people if I should suffer myself to be prevailed upon to make such an use of my prerogative as I cannot but think inconsistent with the interest, and dangerous to the constitution, of the kingdom.'

Whereupon Beckford, excited beyond all regard for the usual formalities of royal audiences, is said to have burst forth in an extempore speech—

'Most gracious Sovereign, will your Majesty be pleased

so far to condescend as to permit the mayor of your loyal City of London to declare in your royal presence, on behalf of his fellow-citizens, how much the bare apprehension of your Majesty's displeasure would at all times affect their minds. The declaration of that displeasure has already filled them with inexpressible anxiety, and with the deepest affliction. Permit me, Sire, to assure your Majesty, that your Majesty has not, in all your dominions, any subjects more faithful, more dutiful, or more affectionate to your Majesty's person and family, or more ready to sacrifice their lives and fortunes in the maintenance of the true honour and dignity of your crown.

'We do, therefore, with the greatest humility and submission, most earnestly supplicate your Majesty that you will not dismiss us from your presence without expressing a more favourable opinion of your faithful citizens, and without some comfort, without some prospect at least of redress.

'Permit me, Sire, further to observe that whoever has already dared, or shall hereafter endeavour, by false insinuations and suggestions, to alienate your Majesty's affections from your loyal subjects in general, and from the City of London in particular, and to withdraw your confidence in and regard for your people, is an enemy to your Majesty's person and family, a violator of the public peace, and a betrayer of our happy constitution as it was established at the glorious Revolution.'

This bold harangue, so contrary to all rules of etiquette, caused a consternation among the courtiers; the King, who had been trapped into hearing it by the surprise of the moment, resented it as an insult;

and the deputation retired with the consciousness that the breach between the City of London and the King had been made wider than ever. Beckford, however, gained great credit by his conduct; the speech that he had made to the King (or the above improved edition of it) was in everybody's lips; and, for the time, he rose to as high a popularity as Wilkes.

While the case of Wilkes, with the numerous questions that had grown out of it, thus formed the chief matter of controversy in the politics of the day, there was another question—fraught, as the issue proved, with still more remarkable consequences—which, after having been a topic of occasional discussion for several years, began, about the time of Chatterton's arrival in London, to assume a more pressing and public aspect. This was the question of the disaffection of the American Colonies.

In the year 1764-5, as all readers of History know, the Parliament of Great Britain gave the first deadly shock to the allegiance of the American Colonies to the British Crown by decreeing the imposition on those Colonies of a general stamp tax. The Colonies, severally and conjointly, had protested and petitioned against this act of authority;

and in 1767 the stamp tax had been exchanged for a duty on paper, glass, painters' colours, and teas. This, however, had not satisfied the Americans. From year to year the topic had been brought up in Parliament, along with that of Wilkes—the politicians and writers who took the side of Wilkes generally also sympathising with the resistance of the American Colonists to the Home Government, while the Court party, who opposed Wilkes, were also eager for maintaining the prerogative of Britain over the Colonies. Things had come to such a pass that many shrewd persons foresaw a war with the Colonies, and prophesied their separation from the mother-country. It was the fear of this result that prompted the administration of Lord North, in the beginning of 1770, to repeal so much of the Act of 1767 as imposed duties on glass, paper, and painters' colours, retaining only the duty on tea. As, by such an arrangement, the obnoxious *principle*, to which the Americans were repugnant, was still maintained and asserted, there was little doubt that it would prove of no avail. But, before news could arrive of the manner in which the Americans had received it, a piece of intelligence crossed the Atlantic which increased the bitterness of the ministerial feeling against the intractable folk

on the other side of the water. On the 26th of April, Chatterton's first day in London, there appeared in the London evening papers paragraphs conveying the news of a serious riot which had occurred in the streets of Boston on the 13th of March. The riot had originated in a quarrel between some of the soldiers who had been quartered in the town greatly against the wishes of the inhabitants and the men at a rope-manufactory belonging to a Mr. Gray. The people of Boston, highly incensed against the military both on account of their insolent behaviour and because they had been sent among them to enforce the odious Tax Act, took part with the rope-makers. There was a violent disturbance of the peace; the troops fired on the people, and some unoffending persons were killed; the whole town rose; and, to prevent still worse results, the military commander had to withdraw the soldiers to some distance. 'Had they not been withdrawn,' said a private letter from Boston, which appeared in the *London Morning Post*, 'the Bostonians would have set fire to their beacon, a tar-barrel stuck on the top of a mast on a high hill, and raised the country for eighty miles round.'

Such was the news which the American post brought to London on the day when Chatterton

began his residence in Shoreditch. For a week, or more, the town was full of it, the Wilkes party rejoicing over it as a new embarrassment to Ministers, and the Ministers themselves not knowing very well what to say or think about it. From that time a war with the Colonies seemed a probable event.

In addition to the protracted Wilkes controversy, and to this matter of the Boston riot and its connection with colonial policy, there were, of course, a variety of minor incidents, of more or less interest, affording materials for gossip to the town during the first five or six weeks of Chatterton's sojourn in it. At that time, as in this, there were balls, horse-races, theatrical performances, murders, robberies, marriages in high life, fires, etc., all duly announced in the public papers, and all excellent *pabulum* for the conversation of the idle and the curious. By way of sample, and that readers may the more easily fill out the picture for themselves, there may be here strung together a few of those defunct *minutiæ*, gathered quite miscellaneously from the columns of the contemporary London newspapers:—

*Wednesday, April* 25 (day of Chatterton's arrival in London)—'Ranelagh House will be opened this evening

with the usual entertainments. Admittance, 2s. 6d. each person; coffee and tea included. The house will continue to be open on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays till farther notice. N.B.—There will be an armed guard on horseback to patrol the roads.'—*Advertisement in* Public Advertiser *of that day.*

*Same evening.*—At Drury-lane, the following performances:—*The Clandestine Marriage.* Lord Ogleby, by Mr. Dibdin; Miss Sterling, by Miss Pope. After which, *The Padlock*, a musical piece. Benefit of Mr. Dibdin.

*Same day.*—A levee at St. James's.

*Thursday, April* 26 (Chatterton's first day in London, and day of the arrival of the news of the Boston Riot).— A masquerade at the Opera House, given by the club at Arthur's: present more than 1,200 of the nobility, ambassadors, etc.

*Same day.*—A bill of indictment found at Hicks's Hall against the author or editor of the *Whisperer*, one of the fiercest of the anti-ministerial periodicals. Warrant for his apprehension issued on the 28th.

*Same evening.*—At Drury-lane, *The Beggar's Opera*, with *The Minor.* Mr. Bannister's benefit.

*Monday, April* 30 (fifth day of Chatterton in London). —At Covent-Garden, Addison's tragedy of *Cato* revived, with *The Rape of Proserpine.*

*Wednesday, May* 2 (Chatterton a week in London).— At Drury-lane, *Hamlet*—the part of Hamlet by Garrick; after which, *Queen Mab.* Benefit night of Signor Grimaldi, Mr. Messenk, and Signor Giorgi.

*Monday, May* 7 (the day on which, as above stated, a crowd gathered at the door of the House of Commons on the false news that Wilkes was to go to the House and claim his seat).—'Rumour that a lady of high quality would appear that evening at the Soho Masquerade in the

character of an Indian princess, most superbly dressed, and with pearls and diamonds to the price of £100,000.; her train to be supported by three black young female slaves, and a canopy to be held over her head by two black male slaves. To be a fine sight.'

*Wednesday, May* 16.—'Thirteen convicts executed together at Tyburn, conveyed in five carts; mostly boys, the eldest not being more than twenty-two years of age. Some of them were greatly affected; others appeared hardened.'

*Saturday, May* 19.—Parliament prorogued, as stated above.

*Wednesday, May* 23.—The famous interview of the City deputation with the King at which Beckford made the speech quoted above.

*Saturday, May* 26.—Drury-lane season closed.

*Monday, May* 28.—Covent-garden Theatre closed for the season.

*Same day.*—'At two o'clock, A.M., a fire at the house of Messrs. Webb and Fry, paper-stainers, Holborn-hill, near the end of Shoe Lane: four persons burnt to death.'

*Same day.*—One of 'Junius's' letters in the *Public Advertiser*, containing a view of the state of the country, and a cutting criticism of the conduct of Ministers during the session just closed. Only two acknowledged letters of 'Junius' appeared during the period of Chatterton's residence in London, and this was one of them.

*Wednesday, May* 30.—'News arrived that a French East Indian ship had reached Toulon, bringing word of a dreadful earthquake at St. Helena, which had entirely sunk the island in the sea.'—*Gentleman's Magazine.*

*Thursday, May* 31.—Foundation-stone of Newgate Prison laid by the Lord Mayor Beckford.

*All April and May.*—Advertisements of goods, sales, quack medicines, and new books in the newspapers; also

paragraphs innumerable on the case of Matthew and Patrick Kennedy, two brothers, who had been tried and condemned to death for the murder of John Bigby, a watchman, but who had obtained a free pardon through the influence of their sister Miss Kennedy, a woman of peculiar reputation, and said to be intimate with some high men at Court. An appeal was laid against this settlement of the matter, and a new trial appointed, much to the gratification of the anti-Court party; but, Bigby's widow having got £380 to keep out of the way, the trial fell to the ground, and the brothers escaped.

It was into the midst of such incidents of these, episodic as they were to the two great topics of Wilkes and the Constitution and the growing disaffection of the American Colonies, that Chatterton had transferred himself by his removal from Bristol to London. With some of the little incidents mentioned he may even have come into direct personal contact. If he did not go to see Addison's tragedy of *Cato* at Covent Garden on the 30th of April, it is not likely that he missed the opportunity of seeing Garrick in *Hamlet* at Drury Lane on the 2nd of May. If the 'fine sight' of the lady of high quality with the hundred thousand pounds' worth of jewels about her, and the three young negresses supporting her train, did not tempt him to the vicinity of the Soho Masquerade on the evening of the 7th of May, it is not at all improbable that he formed one of

the crowd that gathered round the door of the House of Commons that evening on the false expectation of seeing Wilkes come to make a scene and get himself committed to custody by the Speaker. Even at the distance of Shoreditch the rumour of the thirteen boys hanged at Tyburn on the morning of the 16th of May must have reached him; for, common as hangings were then, such an occurrence was sufficiently unusual to make some commotion through all London. The prorogation of Parliament on the 19th of the same month would be a matter to interest him; much more the royal audience given to the City deputation on the 23rd, and Beckford's famous speech. Shoe Lane being one of his haunts, the charred ruins of the premises of Messrs. Webb and Fry may possibly have attracted his notice on the 28th or 29th of May as he passed along Holborn; and, a daily frequenter as he was of the coffee-houses where the newspapers were to be seen, he is sure to have been one of the earliest and most eager readers of the *Public Advertiser* containing Junius's powerful letter of May the 28th.

Nor is all this mere conjecture. Not only do we know it as a fact that it was part of Chatterton's ambition in coming to London to work himself into

connection with the prominent men and interests of the day, and, above all, with the notable personages of the Wilkes party; we also know it as a fact that, to some small extent at least, he succeeded in doing so. The evidence of this will be produced in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### SETTING THE THAMES ON FIRE

CHATTERTON'S London life forms the subject of a brief French romance from the pen of Alfred de Vigny.

In that writer's pleasing volume of fiction entitled *Stello*, Chatterton is introduced as the real hero in the story of a so-called Kitty Bell. Kitty Bell is a young married woman who keeps a pastrycook's shop in the neighbourhood of the Houses of Parliament. Her cakes and confections are celebrated far and wide; and, partly from this cause, partly from Kitty's own attractiveness, her shop has become a habitual lounge of the legislators of Great Britain as they pass to and from their duties in St. Stephen's. Kitty, however, is as virtuous as she is pretty; and, though her husband is a sulky brute, and the young lords and members of Parliament are very assiduous in buying cakes from her fair fingers, nothing amiss can be said of her. There

is one figure, indeed, occasionally seen hovering about the shop, the apparition of which invariably discomposes her, especially when her husband is near. This turns out to be Chatterton, who, having come to London to push his fortune, has, in order to be near the Houses of Parliament, taken a lodging in Kitty Bell's house. Kitty, with her womanly tact, has contrived to dive into her mysterious lodger's secret. She has ascertained that he is a young man of genius, engaged in the hopeless task of establishing a connection with the public men of the day by means of literary service, and in the meantime without a penny in his pocket. She does all, in the circumstances, that fear of her brute of a husband will permit. She supplies her lodger furtively with tarts; she screens from her husband the fact that he is unable to pay his rent for the garret he occupies; and, in short, through pity and interest, she falls most foolishly in love with him. Sustained by her kindness and encouragement, Chatterton perseveres in his enterprise; he gets acquainted with the Lord Mayor Beckford, and is led to conceive great hopes from promise of his patronage. Beckford, accordingly, calls one day at Kitty Bell's shop, and, by way of fulfilling his promise, offers to make Chatterton his—footman!

Then comes the catastrophe. Chatterton, in despair, commits suicide; and poor Kitty Bell is left to serve out cakes and comfits to the British Legislature with a heart no more.

A very pretty story this; with, unfortunately, but one objection to it—that it is not true! The true story of Chatterton's London life, one would suppose, is to be preferred to a false one; and, as the materials for the true story were accessible to Alfred de Vigny in Chatterton's own letters, it is a pity that he was so fond of fiction as not to pay attention to them. Instead of going to lodge at Kitty Bell's, or at any other conceivable pastry-cook's in Westminster, Chatterton, as we know, had gone to lodge at a plasterer's in Shoreditch; and, if Providence was so kind as to supply him with a fair consoler living under the same roof, this, as we also know, can possibly, in the first stage of his London career, have been no other than the motherly Mrs. Ballance, or, at best, that hussy, the landlady's niece, to whom he 'used sometimes to be saucy.' And so with the rest of the facts. The real progress of Chatterton's endeavours to make himself known—the real extent of his success in working himself, from his centre in Shoreditch, into connection with the metropolitan men and interests of the day, as

they have been summarily described in the last chapter—are to be gathered, so far as they can be gathered at all, from his own letters.

Chatterton's second letter to his mother was written on the 6th of May, or after he had been exactly ten days in London. It is as follows—

'SHOREDITCH, LONDON: *May* 6, 1770.

'DEAR MOTHER,—I am surprised that no letter has been sent in answer to my last. I am settled, and in such a settlement as I would desire. I get four guineas a month by one magazine; shall engage to write a History of England and other pieces, which will more than double that sum. Occasional essays for the daily papers would more than support me. What a glorious prospect! Mr. Wilkes knew me by my writings since I first corresponded with the booksellers here. I shall visit him next week, and by his interest will ensure Mrs. Ballance the Trinity House. He affirmed that what Mr. Fell had of mine could not be the writings of a youth, and expressed a desire to know the author. By the means of another bookseller, I shall be introduced to Townshend and Sawbridge. I am quite familiar at the Chapter Coffee-house, and know all the geniuses there. A character is now unnecessary; an author carries his character in his pen. My sister will improve herself in drawing. My grandmother is, I hope, well. Bristol's mercenary walls were never destined to hold me; there I was out of my element; now I am in it. London!—good God! how superior is London to that despicable place Bristol! Here is none of your little meannesses, none of your mercenary securities, which disgrace that miserable hamlet. Dress, which is in Bristol an eternal fund of scandal, is here only

introduced as a subject of praise: if a man dresses well, he has taste; if careless, he has his own reasons for so doing, and is prudent. Need I remind you of the contrast? The poverty of authors is a common observation, but not always a true one. No author can be poor who understands the arts of booksellers: without this necessary knowledge the greatest genius may starve, and with it the greatest dunce live in splendour. This knowledge I have pretty well dipped into.—The Levant man-of-war, in which T. Wensley went out, is at Portsmouth; but no news of him yet. I lodge in one of Mr. Walmsley's best rooms. Let Mr. Cary copy the letters on the other side, and give them to the persons for whom they are designed, if not too much labour for him.—I remain yours, etc.

'T. CHATTERTON.'

'P.S.—I have some trifling presents for my mother, sister, Thorne, etc.'

[Here follow the letters to various Bristol acquaintances, which Mr. Cary was to copy out and give them]—

'*Mr. T. Cary.*—I have sent you a task—I hope no unpleasing one. Tell all your acquaintances for the future to read the *Freeholder's Magazine.* When you have anything for publication, send it to me, and it shall most certainly appear in some periodical compilation. Your last piece was, by the ignorance of a corrector, jumbled under the "considerations" in the acknowledgements; but I rescued it, and insisted on its appearance. Your friend,

'T. C.'

'Direct for me, to be left at the Chapter Coffee-house, Paternoster Row.'

'*Mr. Henry Kator.*—If you have not forgot Lady Betty, any complaint, rebus, or enigma, on the dear charmer,

directed for me, to be left at the Chapter Coffee-house, Paternoster Row, shall find a place in some magazine or other, as I am engaged in many.—Your friend,

'T. CHATTERTON.'

'*Mr. Wm. Smith.*—When you have any poetry for publication, send it to me, to be left at the Chapter Coffee-house, Paternoster Row, and it shall most certainly appear. Your friend, T. C.'

'*Mrs. Baker.*—The sooner I see you the better. Send me, as soon as possible, Rymsdyk's address. (Mr. Cary will leave this at Mr. Flower's, Small-street).'

'*Mr. Mason.*—Give me a short prose description of the situation of Nash; and the poetic addition shall appear in some magazine. Send me also whatever you would have published, and direct for me, to be left at the Chapter Coffee-house, Paternoster Row.—Your friend,

'T. CHATTERTON.'

'*Mr. Matthew Mease.*—Begging Mr. Mease's pardon for making public use of his name lately, I hope he will remember me, and tell all his acquaintances to read the *Freeholder's Magazine* for the future.—

'T. CHATTERTON.'

'Tell Mr. Thaire, Mr. Gaster, Mr. A. Broughton, Mr. J. Broughton, Mr. Williams, Mr. Rudhall, Mr. Thomas, Mr. Carty, Mr. Hanmor, Mr. Vaughan, Mr. Ward, Mr. Kalo, Mr. Smith, etc., to read the *Freeholder's Magazine.*'

This is certainly pretty well after only ten days in London. We fear, indeed, that there is a good deal of bragging in the letter, intended to convey to his

Bristol acquaintances a more favourable impression of the progress he had already made in the great metropolis than the facts, as known to himself, exactly warranted. Still it is evident that Chatterton, when he wrote the letter, was in high spirits. Reducing the expressions of the letter to the real substance of fact on which they may have been founded, we should be inclined to say that the information here given respecting the extent of Chatterton's success in introducing himself to notice during his first ten days in London amounts to something like this :—

Being a youth of prepossessing appearance and address, and having, as we know, a sufficiently good opinion of himself to prevent any of that awkwardness in meeting strangers which arises from excessive modesty, he had made the best use he could of the slight hold he had on Fell, Hamilton, Edmunds, and Dodsley. He had gone to their places of business, perhaps oftener than they cared to see him; he had talked with them, made proposals of literary assistance to them, compelled them into saying something that could be construed as encouragement; he had got from them hints as to other quarters to which he might apply; he had, probably by their advice, turned his hopes towards

the great book-mart of Paternoster Row, where all sorts of speculations he might help in were going on; and he had thus at last found himself referred to that celebrated place of resort for the booksellers of the day and their literary workmen, the Chapter Coffee-house. Mr. Peter Cunningham, in his *Handbook of London*, has provided us with an extract respecting this once famous rendezvous, which will serve to give us a more distinct idea of it as it was in Chatterton's time.

'And here my publisher would not forgive me, was I to leave the neighbourhood without taking notice of the Chapter Coffee-house, which is frequented by those encouragers of literature and (as they are styled by an eminent critic) 'not the worst judges of merit,' the booksellers. The conversation here naturally turns upon the newest publications; but their criticisms are somewhat singular. When they say a *good* book, they do not mean to praise the style or sentiment, but the quick and extensive sale of it. That book is best which sells most; and, if the demand for Quarles should be greater than for Pope, he would have the highest place on the rubric-post.' *The Connoisseur*, No. 1, Jan. 31st, 1754.

Here, then, among the talking groups of booksellers we are to fancy Chatterton a daily visitor during the first week or two of his stay in town—reading the newspapers, listening to the conversation, getting acquainted with the 'geniuses' of the place, and

giving very small orders to the waiters. The Chapter Coffee-house was evidently a great place in his eyes, and every shilling spent in it he probably regarded as a good investment. All his Bristol friends were to address their letters to him there, and not to Shoreditch.

More particularly, however, Chatterton's hopes at the period of his first settlement in London seem to have rested on the intimacy he had struck up with Mr. Fell. We have already given our impression of this personage, representing him as a gentleman in pecuniary difficulties, connected with Wilkes, and employing his broken energies, and the capital of other people, in the publication of the *Freeholder's Magazine*. His reception of Chatterton, we said, appears to have been, and this probably from the state of his own circumstances, more frank and cordial than that of any other of the booksellers Chatterton had called upon. A kind of understanding seems, indeed, to have been at once established between them. On the one hand, Chatterton was to have the pages of the *Freeholder's Magazine* thrown open to him; on the other hand, Fell, to whom the service of a clever contributor on any other terms than those of hard cash was probably a convenience, was willing to remunerate his young friend with plenty of

promises, and in the meantime with the benefits of his advice and countenance, and as much praise as he liked. The prospect of being introduced to Wilkes was the most attractive bait that could be held out to Chatterton; and we greatly fear Fell made the most of the fact. 'I assure you, Mr. Chatterton, Mr. Wilkes has a high opinion of you; he has more than once asked me about writings of yours; and, when I told him that you were not eighteen, "Upon my soul I don't believe it, Mr. Fell," said he; "so young a man could not write like that": these were his very words.' Such, as we infer from Chatterton's own account, was the substance of much of his conversation with Fell.

How much of sincerity there was in Fell's farther promise, that he would introduce Chatterton to Wilkes, one can hardly say. There is certainly some bragging in the manner in which Chatterton announces to his mother the promised introduction: 'I shall visit him (Wilkes) next week, and by his interest, will ensure Mrs Ballance the Trinity House' (*i.e.* the charitable allowance granted out of the funds of this foundation to the widows of deserving seamen). Chatterton had shrewdness enough, with all his inexperience and his good opinion of himself, to know that he was putting a little strain on the

truth here. So also, probably, in the matter of the proposed introductions to the two popular aldermen, Townshend and Sawbridge. Still it is evident that he had some trust in Fell. To read the *Freeholder's Magazine*, and to address letters to him at the Chapter Coffee-house in Paternoster Row, were his two injunctions to his friends at home after he had been ten days in London.

What came of the connection so rapidly formed with Fell and the *Freeholder's Magazine* will be seen from Chatterton's next letter. It is to his mother—

'KING'S BENCH, for the present: *May* 14, 1770

'DEAR MADAM,—Don't be surprised at the name of the place. I am not here as a prisoner. Matters go on swimmingly. Mr. Fell having offended certain persons, they have set his creditors upon him, and he is safe in the King's Bench. I have been bettered by this accident: his successors in the *Freeholder's Magazine*, knowing nothing of the matter, will be glad to engage me on my own terms. Mr. Edmunds has been tried before the House of Lords, sentenced to pay a fine, and thrown into Newgate. His misfortunes will be to me of no little service. Last week, being in the pit of Drury Lane Theatre [it might have been to see Garrick again], I contracted an immediate acquaintance (which you know is no hard task to me) with a young gentleman in Cheapside, partner in a music-shop, the greatest in the city. Hearing I could write, he desired me to write a few songs for him: this I did the same night,

and conveyed them to him the next morning. These he showed to a Doctor in music, and I am invited to treat with the Doctor, on the footing of a composer for Ranelagh and the Gardens. *Bravo, hey boys, up we go!* Besides the advantage of visiting these expensive and polite places gratis, my vanity will be fed with the sight of my name in copper-plate, and my sister will receive a bundle of printed songs, the words by her brother. These are not all my acquisitions. A gentleman who knows me at the 'Chapter' as an author would have introduced me as a companion to the young Duke of Northumberland in his intended general tour. But alas! I speak no tongue but my own. But to return once more to a place I am sickened to write of, Bristol. [Here follow some references to Mr. Lambert and a 'clearance' from the apprenticeship to be obtained from him.] I will get some patterns worth your acceptance, and wish you and my sister would improve yourselves in drawing, as it is here a valuable and never-failing acquisition. My box shall be attended to; I hope my books are in it. If not, send them, and particularly Catcott's Hutchinsonian jargon on the Deluge, and the MS. Glossary, composed of one small book annexed to a larger. My sister will remember me to Miss Sandford. I have not quite forgot her; though there are so many pretty milliners, etc., that I have almost forgot myself.

[There are similar remembrances and messages to Mr. Cary; to Miss Rumsey, who seems to be intending a journey to London, and is requested to send Chatterton her address, if she does come, as 'London is not Bristol,' and they 'may patrol the town for a day without raising one whisper or nod of scandal'; to Miss Baker, Miss Porter, Miss Singer, Miss Webb, and Miss Thatcher, who is assured that, 'if he is not in love with her, he is in love with nobody else'; to Miss Love, on whose name he is going to write a song; to Miss Cotton, 'begging her

pardon for whatever has happened to offend her, and telling her he did not give her this assurance when in Bristol lest it should seem like an attempt to avoid the anger of her *furious* brother'; finally to Miss Watkins, assuring her 'that the letter she has made herself ridiculous by was never intended for her, but for another young lady in the same neighbourhood, of the same name.' Chatterton also asks his sister to send him 'a journal of all the transactions of the females within the circle of their acquaintance.']

'I promised, before my departure, to write to some hundreds, I believe; but, what with writing for publications and going to places of public diversion, which is as absolutely necessary to me as food, I find but little time to write to *you*. As to Mr. Barrett, Mr. Catcott, Mr. Burgum, etc., they rate literary lumber so low that I believe an author in their estimation must be poor indeed. But here matters are otherwise: had Rowley been a Londoner, instead of a Bristowyan, I could have lived by copying his works. . . . My youthful acquaintances will not take in dudgeon that I do not write oftener to them; but, as I had the happy art of pleasing in conversation, my company was often liked where I did not like; and to continue a correspondence under such circumstances would be ridiculous. Let my sister improve in copying music, drawing, and everything which requires genius: in Bristol's mercantile style those things may be useless, if not a detriment to her; but here they are highly profitable.

[A few additional messages to Bristol friends follow, together with a hope that his grandmother 'enjoys the state of health he left her in,' and an intimation, apparently in connection with Mrs. Ballance's business, that he had 'intended waiting on the Duke of Bedford relative to the Trinity House, but his Grace is dangerously ill.']

'THOMAS CHATTERTON.'

'*Monday evening.*

'Direct to me at Mr. Walmsley's, at Shoreditch—*only.*'

To this letter succeeds one written to his sister. dated May the 30th, from Tom's Coffee-house—a house in Devereux Court, Strand, and hardly inferior to the Chapter Coffee-house as a place of resort for wits and men of letters.

'TOM'S COFFEE-HOUSE, LONDON: *May* 30, 1770

'DEAR SISTER,—There is such a noise of business and politics in the room that any inaccuracy in writing here is highly excusable. My present profession obliges me to frequent places of the best resort. To begin with what every female conversation begins with—dress: I employ my money now in fitting myself fashionably, and getting into good company. This last article always brings me in interest. But I have engaged to live with a gentleman, the brother of a lord (a Scotch one, indeed), who is going to advance pretty deeply into the bookselling branches. I shall have board and lodging, genteel and elegant, gratis: this article, in the quarter of the town he lives, with worse accommodations, would be £50 per annum. I shall have likewise no inconsiderable premium; and assure yourself every month shall end to your advantage. I will send you two silks this summer; and expect, in answer to this, what colours you prefer. My mother shall not be forgotten. My employment will be writing a voluminous History of London, to appear in numbers, the beginning of next winter. As this will not, like writing political essays, oblige me to go to the Coffee-house, I shall be able to serve you the more by it; but it will necessitate me to go to Oxford, Cambridge, Lincoln, Coventry, and every

collegiate church near—not at all disagreeable journeys, and not to me expensive. The manuscript glossary I mentioned in my last must not be omitted. If money flowed as fast upon me as honours, I would give you a portion of £5,000. You have, doubtless, heard of the Lord Mayor's remonstrating and addressing the King; but it will be a piece of news to inform you that *I* have been with the Lord Mayor on the occasion. Having addressed an essay to his Lordship, it was very well received—perhaps better than it deserved; and I waited on his Lordship to have his approbation to address a second letter to him, on the subject of the remonstrance and its reception. His Lordship received me as politely as a citizen could, and warmly invited me to call on him again. The rest is a secret.——But the Devil of the matter is, there is no money to be got on this side of the question. Interest is on the other side. But he is a poor author who cannot write on both sides. I believe I may be introduced (and, if I am not, I'll introduce myself) to a ruling power in the Court party. I might have a recommendation to Sir George Colebrook, an East India Director, as qualified for an office no ways despicable; but I shall not take a step to the sea whilst I can continue on land. I went yesterday to Woolwich to see Mr. Wensley: he is paid to-day. The artillery is no unpleasant sight, if we bar reflection, and do not consider how much mischief it may do. Greenwich Hospital and St. Paul's Cathedral are the only structures which could reconcile me to anything out of the Gothic. [Here are some messages to Mr. Carty about Mrs. Carty, who is ill, advising him to 'leech her temples plentifully, and keep her very low in diet, and as much in the dark as possible'; also to Miss Sandford, to Miss Thatcher, and to Miss Rumsey, whom he 'thanks for her complimentary expression' in reply to his last message; though, as she does not say whether she is coming to London or not, he

thinks it 'unsatisfactory.'] Essay-writing has this advantage—you are sure of constant pay; and, when you have once wrote a piece which makes the author inquired after, you may bring the booksellers to your own terms. Essays on the patriotic side fetch no more than what the copy is sold for. As the patriots themselves are searching for a place, they have no gratuities to spare. So says one of the beggars in a temporary alteration of mine in the *Jovial Crew*—

"A patriot was my occupation;
It got me a name, but no pelf;
Till, starved for the good of the nation,
I begg'd for the good of myself.
Fal, lal, etc.

"I told them, if 'twas not for me,
Their freedoms would all go to pot;
I promised to set them all free,
But never a farthing I got.
Fal, lal, etc."

On the other hand, unpopular essays will not even be accepted, and you must pay to have them printed; but then you seldom lose by it. Courtiers are so sensible of their deficiency in merit that they generally reward all who know how to daub them with the appearance of it. To return to private affairs: Friend Slude may depend upon my endeavouring to find the publications you mention. They publish the *Gospel Magazine* here. For a whim, I write for it. I believe there are not any sent to Bristol; they are hardly worth the carriage—methodistical and unmeaning. With the usual ceremonies to my mother and grandmother, and sincerely, without ceremony, wishing them both happy—when it is in my power to make them so, it shall be so—and with my kind remembrance

to Miss Webb and Miss Thorne, I remain, as I ever was,—Yours, etc., to the end of the chapter,

'THOMAS CHATTERTON.'

'P.S.—I am this moment pierced through the heart by the black eye of a young lady, driving along in a hackney-coach. I am quite in love; if my love lasts till that time, you shall hear of it in my next.'

After this letter there is a blank in the correspondence, so far as it has been preserved, for three weeks. During those three weeks, however, an event of some importance in Chatterton's London life took place—to wit, a change of domicile.

From the very first, it may be imagined, he had regarded Mr. Walmsley's as only a temporary residence, convenient until he should find a better. The economy of Mr. Walmsley's house can have been by no means to his taste. To have to share a bedroom with Master Walmsley, and to be continually in contact with the various inmates of the plasterer's house, more especially with Mrs. Ballance, who would persist in calling him 'Cousin Tommy,' must have been disagreeable to him on more accounts than one. Besides, had there been no other reason for a change, the distance of Shoreditch from the publishing-offices where he had to make his calls, and from the coffee-houses and other places of resort

which he believed himself bound to frequent, would have been a sufficient one. Accordingly, as soon as he began to see his way clear to future employment, he determined to seek another lodging. During the first week of June we may fancy him going about on search through all the likely streets that take his fancy within a moderate range from Paternoster Row. At last, some afternoon, going up Holborn towards the West End, after calling at the office of the *Middlesex* in Shoe Lane, he is caught by the appearance of Brooke Street, a tidy, quiet-looking street, striking off from Holborn on the right, a little on the City-side of Gray's Inn Lane. He turns aside from Holborn into this street; sees perhaps various tickets of 'Rooms to let' hung up in the windows; but, on the whole, likes best one particular house so distinguished. The tenant is one Frederick Angell, of uncertain occupation; but, if there is any name on the door, it is not his, but his wife's, thus—'Mrs. Angell, Sack-maker.' (The term 'sack-maker,' from 'sack' or '*sac*'—the older naturalised French name of a portion of feminine attire which we now render by a later—was then equivalent, or nearly so, to our term 'dress-maker.') At the door of this house, after sufficient inspection of it from the outside, he knocks rather loudly. The knock is answered, probably

by Mrs. Angell herself—a pleasant-looking person, one may imagine her, of matronly age, or nearly so. He states his object; is shown various rooms of which he may have his choice; and in the end bargains for one, which is both bedroom and sitting-room, almost at the top of the house, but with the window to the front. Thither, either the same day or within a day or two, he removes his things, alleging no reason either to Mrs. Walmsley or to Mrs. Ballance, as they afterwards told Sir Herbert Croft, for his leaving them so suddenly. On clearing up the room he had occupied, after he was gone, they found the floor 'covered with little pieces of paper, the remains of his poetings.' It seems, however, that he did not all at once cease his visits at Walmsley's house, but for some time at least continued to call there in the course of the day.

The house in Brooke Street, Holborn, where Mrs. Angell lived, and where, after the first week of June, 1770, Chatterton had his lodging, existed, little changed, till within very recent memory. It was that which bore the number 39 on the west side of the street, *i.e.* the left-hand side as you go into the street from Holborn. In a garret room in that old house—which till 1880 was visible without trouble to the outside passengers of every omnibus

going down Holborn to the City, or returning up Holborn from the City—Chatterton had his abode. A far more cheerful abode, in external respects, it must have been than the one he had left at Shoreditch—high up indeed, with only the airy heaven above, and a prospect of roofs and chimneys round, and yet, if he chose to stretch a little over the window, a sight of Brooke Street below and of the thoroughfare of Holborn to the right. The street was respectable itself, with good enough shops in it; and only at the inner end—where it widened into a little irregular space, and bent off into alleys, affording room for a small shabby market for meat and vegetables, known in the neighbourhood as Brooke Market—did it lead into still shabbier purlieus.[1]

[1] There is a correction in this paragraph of an error in the first edition of this story of Chatterton's life. Trusting to general tradition, and especially to the excellent authority of the late Mr. Peter Cunningham in his *Handbook of London*, I there identified the house in Brooke Street in which Chatterton lodged with that afterwards numbered 4 in the street, situated on the east side, or right-hand side of the street as you go from Holborn—which No. 4, at the time I wrote, had been absorbed into one large block of premises at the Holborn end of the street, occupied by a furniture-dealer, whose main door was in Holborn. The mistake was rectified by Mr. W. Moy Thomas, in a letter published in the *Athenæum* of Dec. 5, 1857; and I hardly know a neater piece of historical inquiry than that by which this gentleman enabled himself to make the rectification. He found the books for the collection of the poor-rates in 1772 from that part of Brooke Street (nearly the whole) which is in the 'Upper Liberty

So particular a description of the old street might not have been necessary, were it not that it may help to make more intelligible a description of the street in one of its nocturnal aspects given by Chatterton himself in his very next letter. This letter, which is dated the 19th of June, has hitherto been generally supposed to have been written at Shoreditch; but it is in itself a distinct confirmation of other and independent proof that he had now quitted that neighbourhood. It was written, we calculate, a week or ten days after he had gone to lodge at Mrs. Angell's.

'*June* 19, 1770.

'DEAR SISTER,—I have an horrid cold. The relation of the manner of my catching it may give you more pleasure than the circumstance itself. As I wrote very late Sunday night (or, rather, very early Monday morning), I thought to have gone to bed pretty soon last night;

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of the parish of St. Andrew's, Holborn'; he found there the name of 'Frederick Angell' as one of the ratepayers; and, by an ingenious observation of the exact place in which this name occurred in the list of the ratepayers of the street upon whom the collector had to call in the order of their houses, aided by a reference to Holden's Directory of 1802, in which two of those ratepayers appeared as still alive and tenanting houses then definitely numbered, he arrived at the conclusion (all but absolutely incontrovertible, I think) that the house of Frederick Angell was the No. 39 of the west side described in the text, and not any house on the opposite side of the street. At the time when Mr. Thomas wrote, the house was occupied by a plumber; in 1874 the lower part was occupied by a a cook-shop; but in 1880 nearly the whole of the west side of Brooke Street, the site of the house included, was utilised for new buildings.

when, being half undressed, I heard a very doleful voice singing Miss Hill's favourite Bedlamite song. The humdrum of the voice so struck me that, though I was obliged to listen a long while before I could hear the words, I found the similitude in the sound. After hearing her, with pleasure, drawl for about half-an-hour, she jumped into a brisker tune, and hobbled out the ever-famous song in which poor Jack Fowler was to have been satirised. "*I put my hand into a bush*," "*I pricked my finger to the bone*," "*I saw a ship sailing along*," "*I thought the sweetest flowers to find*," and other pretty flowery expressions, were twanged with no inharmonious bray. I now ran to the window, and threw up the sash, resolved to be satisfied whether or no it was the identical Miss Hill *in propriâ personâ*. But alas! it was a person whose twang is very well known when she is awake, but who had drunk so much royal-bob (the gingerbread-baker for that, you know!) that she was now singing herself asleep. This somnifying liquor had made her voice so like the sweet echo of Miss Hill's that, if I had not imagined that she could not see her way up to London, I should absolutely have imagined it hers. [Here for some lines, the letter is hardly legible; but Chatterton seems to say that in the street under his window he saw, besides the singer, a fellow loitering about in bad female company; which fellow he had again, that very morning, on his return from 'Marybone Gardens,' seen in custody 'at the watch-house in the parish of St. Giles.' He then describes a third figure who completed the picturesque street-group, as follows:] A drunken fisherman, who sells soused mackerel and other delicious dainties, to the eternal detriment of all twopenny ordinaries—as his best commodity, his salmon, goes off at three half-pence the piece—this itinerant merchant, this moveable fish-stall, having likewise had his dose of bob-royal, stood still for a while, and then joined chorus in a tone which would have

laid half-a-dozen lawyers, pleading for their fees, fast asleep. This naturally reminded me of Mr. Haythorne's song of

"Says Plato, who-oy-oy-oy should man be vain?"

However, my entertainment, though sweet enough in itself, has a dish of sour sauce served up in it; for I have a most horrible wheezing in the throat. But I don't repent that I have this cold; for there are so many nostrums here that 'tis worth a man's while to get a distemper, he can be cured so cheap.'

Chatterton does not despatch this letter immediately, but keeps it by him for ten days, when he adds a postscript as follows:—

'*June* 29th, 1770.—My cold is over and gone. If the above did not recall to your mind some sense of laughter, you have lost your ideas of risibility."

The letter *may* have made his sister laugh, as was intended; but on us, at this distance of time, the impression is very different. We have always remembered one particular passage in *Pepys's Diary* as perhaps more mystically vivid than anything else in that famous book. It is the passage describing an excursion which Pepys and some companions of his belonging to the Navy-office made down the river Thames. They returned at night, when it was pitch dark, making their way slowly and with much trepidation along the middle

of the river as near as they could guess, and hailing the moored craft that they passed, in order to ascertain their whereabouts. Not a soul seemed to be awake on the whole river to answer their cries; and the only sound they could hear was that of a dog incessantly barking somewhere, either on the south side of the river, or on board of some vessel left to his charge. The barking of that dog has been in our ears ever since; intimating with a kind of ghastly vividness, which none of all Pepys's other commemorations, though they are vivid enough, can match, that, in those old days of Pepys and his fellow Londoners, the black river flowed then at night just as now, and that a world of now defunct life alternately roared and reposed on its banks. And so with this last-quoted letter of Chatterton. As we read it we are in Brooke Street, Holborn, on a summer night a hundred and thirty years ago. And what do we see? A wretched, drunken woman passing from side to side in the faint light, and disturbing the deserted street with snatches of song; after a while, a costermonger, also drunk, reeling out from some neighbouring obscurity, and, caught by the music, joining it on his own account with a stentorian bass; and meantime, standing at a corner, indifferently looking on, a hulking figure

of 'the dangerous class,' who completes the trio. And is this all? Hist! An upper window in one of the houses, in which the light has not yet been put out, is thrown up, and the head and face of a young man emerge: a wonderful head and face, if we could see them; the face pale, under dark clustering hair, and the eyes a bold and burning grey. He leans out, surveys the street group far below, seems interested; and, with his face resting on his two hands, and his elbows resting on the window-sill, he remains gazing out half-an-hour or more. Oh month of June, 1770! and is this the kind of educating circumstance you provide for Chatterton, solitary in his London lodging, and alert in his solitude for objects to occupy his eyes, and incite him to new trains of thought? A poor sleeping street, and a serenade of two drunkards! No, as he gazes, the drunkards reel out of view into other streets, their voices growing fainter as they go; the hulking fellow at the corner also moves off, destiny guiding him along Holborn to St. Giles's watch-house; the street then, though still the same narrow and poor one, is swept at least of its human degradation; the mood of the gazer changes also; and, though he remains still gazing, it is not at the street any longer, but at the soft summer stars!

One letter more closes the series of those sent by Chatterton to Bristol during his first two months in London. It is addressed to his friend T. Cary, and bears no date. From some allusions in the letter, however, we are able to say with tolerable certainty that it was written on June 29th or 30th, the day before the June magazine-day. A considerable part of the letter is taken up with an answer to some objections which Cary had made to a panegyric of Chatterton's on Mr. Allen, the organist of Bristol, at the expense of his brother organist Mr. Broderip. The panegyric is undoubtedly that contained in the long poem called *Kew Gardens*, written before Chatterton had left Bristol, which was then unpublished, but which Cary had, it seems, just been reading in manuscript—

'What charms has music when great Broderip sweats
To torture sound to what his brother sets!
With scraps of ballad-tunes, and *gude Scotch sangs*,
Which god-like Ramsay to his bagpipe twangs,
With tatter'd fragments of forgotten plays,
With Playford's melody to Sternhold's lays,
This pipe of science, mighty Broderip, comes
And a strange, unconnected jumble thrums
Roused to devotion in a sprightly air,
Danced into piety, and jigg'd to prayer,
A modern hornpipe's murder greets our ears,
The heavenly music of domestic spheres;
The flying band in swift transition hops
Through all the tortured, vile burlesque of stops.

Sacred to sleep, in superstition's key,
Dull, doleful diapasons die away ;
Sleep spreads his silken wings, and, lull'd by sound,
The vicar slumbers, and the snore goes round,
Whilst Broderip at his passive organ groans
Through all his slow variety of tones.
How unlike Allen ! Allen is divine.
His touch is sentimental, tender, fine ;
No little affectations e'er disgraced
His more refined, his sentimental taste ;
He keeps the passions with the sound in play,
And the soul trembles with the trembling key.'

Cary, probably in a letter sent after Chatterton to London, had objected to this as too partial to Allen, and as unfair to Broderip. Chatterton, premising that he believes 'there are very few in Bristol who know what music is,' defends his comparative estimate of the two organists, and reiterates his praise of Allen in strong terms, and his contempt for his rival. 'I am afraid, my dear friend,' he says, 'you do not understand the merit of a full piece ; if you did, you would confess to me that Allen is the only organist you have in Bristol.' He then continues—

'A song of mine is a great favourite with the town, on account of the fulness of the music. It has much of Mr. Allen's manner in the air. You will see that and twenty more in print after the season is over. I yesterday heard several airs of my Burletta sung to the harpsichord, horns, bassoons, hautboys, violins, etc., and

will venture to pronounce, from the excellence of the music, that it will take with the town. Observe, I write in all the magazines. I am surprised you took no notice of the last *London*. In that and the magazine coming out to-morrow are the only two pieces I have the vanity to call poetry. Mind the *Political Register*. I am very intimately acquainted with the editor, who is also editor of another publication. You will find not a little of mine in the *London Museum*, and *Town and Country*. The printers of the daily publications are all frightened out of their patriotism, and will take nothing unless 'tis moderate or ministerial. I have not had five patriotic essays this fortnight. All must be ministerial or entertaining.—I remain yours, etc. T. CHATTERTON.'

The last four letters have been presented in their series, with no other remarks than were necessary to make their meaning clear.[1] It is obvious, however, that, if we are to ascertain the coherent story of Chatterton's London life during the two months they include—*i.e.*, during the six or seven weeks of his residence at Shoreditch, and the first two or three of his residence in Brooke Street—we must go over the ground again for ourselves, weaving the facts together, as already reported or as independently known, and allowing for exaggerations.

[1] All the letters of Chatterton contained in this chapter, with the exception of that to Cary, were first collected and printed by Sir Herbert Croft in his *Love and Madness*; from the second edition of which, published in 1786, I have taken them.

In the first place, it may be repeated, there is abundant evidence that Chatterton's activity during his first two months in London, his perseverance in introducing himself and trying to form connections, was something unparalleled. Very few young men of his age could have gone through this preliminary part of the business with half so much of courage and self-assurance. He seems to have been capable of ringing any number of bells, and sending in his name, known or unknown, to any number of persons, in the course of a forenoon; and one wonders at how many of all the doors in London he did actually present himself during his stay there. Fell, Edmunds, Hamilton, and Dodsley were the persons he had begun with; but he soon added others, and still others, to the circle of those whom he favoured with his calls. That he might the more easily carry out his plan of getting acquainted with people likely to be of use to him, he went daily to the Chapter Coffee-house, Tom's Coffee-house, and like places of resort; entering, no doubt, into conversation with many who gave him short answers, and wondered who the pert youth was. If we consider how those places were frequented, we can easily suppose that there were men of note at that time in London who might have afterwards remembered that they had in this way

seen Chatterton. 'I am quite familiar,' he says in his letter of the 6th of May, 'at the Chapter Coffee-house, and know all the geniuses there.' One observes, however, that in the postscript to his next letter, of May 14th, he retracts the direction he had given to his mother and his friends to address to him at the Chapter, and bids them address him 'at Mr. Walmsley's, Shoreditch, only.' Had he received any rebuff at the Chapter, that made him discontinue the house? If so, there were other coffee-houses, one of them Tom's. The theatres, too, and other places of amusement served his purpose. By the 28th of May, indeed, as has been seen, both Drury Lane and Covent Garden were closed for the season; but during the preceding month he had no doubt visited both several times, at once enjoying the play and, as on the occasion he mentions in his letter of the 14th, picking up friends in the pit. After the great houses were closed, there were still some minor theatres, besides Ranelagh Gardens and Marylebone Gardens, to furnish music and other entertainments; and there, too, Chatterton occasionally paid his half-crown, flattering himself it was an investment.

So much for the *effort* made. What as to the *success*? After every allowance for his own

exaggerations, it appears to have been by no means inconsiderable.

Evidently, his great object, after his first arrival in London, was to distinguish himself as a political writer on the 'patriotic' or Opposition side. This was to be his short cut to fame and wealth. To write such letters for the *Middlesex Journal*, the *Freeholder's Magazine*, and other Opposition organs, as should rival those of Junius, and make him be inquired after by the heads of the party, and so put forward and provided for: this was the immediate form of his ambition. Fell and Edmunds were here his chief reliance; but, above all, he desired to be introduced to Wilkes. Could that be done, his fortune would be made! And Fell, as we have seen, was to manage it for him. Unfortunately, when the promised time came, Fell was not in a position to keep his promise, having been laid up in the King's Bench for debt, where Chatterton visited him. Edmunds, too, was put out of reach about the same time, having been made an example of by the Government, and thrown into Newgate by way of warning to 'patriotic' publishers. The incarceration of those two friends of Chatterton at the very time when he was expecting so much from them must, one would think, have been a mis-

fortune. But he represents it otherwise. The *Freeholder's Magazine* had only gone into other hands; and he should be able to write for it still, and on better terms than if Fell had remained editor! The *Middlesex Journal*, too, was still to go on (Hamilton of the *Town and Country Magazine* had come to the rescue and taken it up); so that here also he should be no worse off than before! Nor were these anticipations falsified. For the *Freeholder's Magazine*, indeed, he does not appear to have written much after coming to London, though one important contribution of his, of which we shall have to take special note hereafter, did appear in the May number of that periodical, *i.e.*, on the 31st of May 1770. But for the *Middlesex Journal*, under Hamilton, he continued to write busily. At least five letters have been disinterred from the columns of that old newspaper, all printed in the month of May 1770, which there is good reason to believe were Chatterton's.[1] They are all signed 'Decimus.' The first, published May 10th, is addressed to the Earl of H——h (Hillsborough, Minister for the American Colonies); the second, published May 15th, is to the P—— D—— of W—— (*i.e.* the

[1] These letters were first reprinted from the *Middlesex Journal* in Dix's *Life of Chatterton*.

Princess Dowager of Wales); the third, published May 22nd, is to the Prime Minister, Lord North, himself; the fourth, published May 26th, is not a letter, but a kind of squib, proposing a series of subjects for an exhibition of sign-board paintings; and the last is a letter 'To the Freeholders of the City of Bristol,' bidding them shake off their lethargy, and imitate the glorious example of London. A sample or two of these effusions may be quoted:—

*From the Letter to the Earl of Hillsborough*, May 10.—'My Lord,—If a constant exercise of tyranny and cruelty has not steeled your heart against all sensations of compunction and remorse, permit me to remind you of the recent massacre in Boston. It is an infamous attribute of the ministry of the Thane that what his tools begin in secret fraud and oppression ends in murder and avowed assassination. Not contented to deprive us of our liberty, they rob us of our lives, knowing from a sad experience that the one without the other is an insupportable burden. Your Lordship has bravely distinguished yourself among the ministers of the present reign. Whilst North and the instruments of his royal mistress settled the plan of operation, it was your part to execute; you were the assassin whose knife was ever ready to finish the crime. If every feeling of humanity is not extinct in you, reflect, for a moment reflect, on the horrid task you undertook and perpetrated. Think of the injury you have done to your country, which nothing but the dissolution of a Parliament not representing the people can erase. . . . Think of the recent murders at Boston. O my Lord! however you may

force a smile into your countenance, however you may trifle in the train of dissipation, your conscience must raise a hell within,' etc.

*From the Letter to the Princess Dowager of Wales*, May 15.—'I could wish your R—— H—— would know how to act worthy your situation in life, and not debase yourself by mingling with a group of ministers the most detestable that ever embroiled a kingdom in discord and commotion. Your consequence in the Council can arise only from your power over his M——y; and that power you possess but by the courtesy of an unaccountable infatuation. Filial duty has nothing to do with the question: a king has no mother, no wife, no friend, considered as a king: his country, his subjects, are the only objects of his public concern.' . . .

*From the Letter to Lord North*, May 22.—'Fly to the Council with your face whitened with fear; tell them that justice is at the door, and the axe will do its office; tell them that, whilst the spirit of English freedom exists, vengeance has also an existence, and, when Britons are denied justice from the powers who have the trust of their rights, the Constitution hath given them a power to do themselves justice.'

*From the Squib describing an Exhibition of Sign-paintings*, May 26.—'No. 3. "*The Union:* An Englishman sleeping and a Scotchman picking his pocket."—"The K——: a sign for a button-maker. The painter, who has not fixed his name to this performance, is certainly a very loyal subject. His M—— has that innocent vacancy of countenance which distinguishes the representation of angels and cherubims; without guilt, without meaning, without everything but an undesigning simplicity. . . ."'

*From the Letter to the Freeholders of Bristol*, May 26.—'Gentlemen,—As a fellow-citizen, I presume to address you on a subject which I hoped would have animated an

abler pen. At this critical situation, when the fate of the Constitution depends upon the exertion of an English spirit, I confess my astonishment at finding you silent. The second city in England should not be ashamed to copy the first in any laudable measure. . . . Remember the speech of the glorious Canynge, in whose repeated mayoralties honour and virtue were not unknown in the corporation. When the unhappy dissensions first broke out between the houses of Lancaster and York, he immediately declared himself for the latter. His lady, fearful of the consequences, begged him to desist, and not ruin himself and family. "My family," replied the brave citizen, "*is* dear to me—Heaven can witness how dear! But, when discord and oppressions begin to distract the realm, my country is my family; and *that* it is my duty to protect."'

These few samples will show how well Chatterton had caught the trick of the Opposition politics of the day, and how expertly he could dress up the popular commonplaces. That his contributions, such as they were, were thought of some value by the conductors of the *Middlesex Journal* is proved by the fact that there was one of them in at least every alternate number during the whole month of May, and by the additional fact that two or three of them were printed in the chief place in the paper.

But Chatterton was not content with writing only for the *Middlesex*. He probably tried others of the Opposition newspapers, including even the great

*Public Advertiser* itself, which Junius had made illustrious. Then, as we shall see, there were various magazines or monthlies, besides the *Freeholder's*, to which he sent more elaborate contributions in the same political strain, for publication, as was then the custom, at the end of the current month. Of these one was the *Political Register*. 'Mind the *Political Register*,' he says to his friend Cary in the end of June: 'I am very intimately acquainted with the editor, who is also editor of another publication.' The acquaintance had probably commenced before the end of May; and it is with the circumstance of his writing for this periodical that we are disposed to connect the story of his introduction to Beckford, as related by himself to his sister in his letter of the 30th of that month. The facts seem to be as follows:—

Anxious from the first to get as near the centre of affairs as he could, and disappointed by Fell's mishap of his expected introduction to Wilkes, he had conceived the idea of making a bold stroke to bring himself into direct relations with the man who for the time was even more of a popular hero than Wilkes—the Lord Mayor Beckford. His plan was to write a letter to his lordship on affairs in general, and more particularly in praise of his lordship's

bold championship of the City in their struggle with the Government. Such a letter he did write. Here is a specimen of what it said—

'My Lord,—The steps you have hitherto taken in the service of your country demand the warmest thanks the gratitude of an Englishman can give. That you will persevere in the glorious task is the wish of every one who is a friend to the constitution of this country. Your integrity ensures you from falling into the infamy of apostasy; and your understanding is a sufficient guard against the secret measures of the Ministry, who are vile enough to stick at no villainy to complete their detestable purposes. Nor can your British heart stoop to fear the contemptible threatenings of a set of hireling wretches who have no power but what they derive from a person who engrosses every power and every vice. . . . If the massacre of the Bostonians was not concerted by the Ministry, they were to be enslaved in consequence of a settled plan; and, as the one was the result of the other, our worthy Ministers were the assassins. Alas! the unhappy town had not a Beckford! He would have checked the audacious insolence of the army, and dared, as an Englishman, to make use of his freedom. . . . His Majesty's behaviour when he received the complaints of his people (not to redress them indeed, but to get rid of them an easier way) was something particular: it was set, formal and studied. Should you address him again, my lord, it would not be amiss to tell his Majesty that you expect *his* answer, and not the answer of his Mother or Ministers. . . . Your lordship has proved the goodness of your heart, the soundness of your principles, and the merit of the cause in which you are engaged, by the rectitude of

your conduct. Scandal maddens at your name, because she finds nothing to reproach you with; and the venal hirelings of the Ministry despair of meriting their pay by blackening your character. Illiberal abuse and gross inconsistencies and absurdities recoil upon their author, and only bear testimony of the weakness of his head or the badness of his heart. That man whose enemies can find nothing to lay to his charge may well dispense with the incoherent Billingsgate of a ministerial writer.'

This letter he intended for the *Political Register.* But, either before getting it accepted there, or while it was still only in type, he sent a copy of it direct to Beckford. He gave his lordship a day or so to read it, and then ventured on that personal call to which he makes allusion in his letter to his sister of May the 30th. His lordship, according to Chatterton's own account—and we see no reason to doubt it—received him very politely, and not only expressed approbation of what he had already written, but consented to have a second letter, on the subject of the City Remonstrance and its reception by the king, publicly addressed to him. This call on Beckford took place probably about the 26th of May, or three days after the great affair of the Remonstrance, and when the town was still ringing with it. At all events, a letter bearing that date, and addressed to the Lord Mayor, was found in

manuscript among Chatterton's papers after his death. This letter, beginning 'When the endeavours of a spirited people to free themselves from an unsupportable slavery,' was almost certainly the letter he had asked leave to address to Beckford; and it shows how completely he had succeeded in his object that he was able to make arrangements for its appearance in no less important a periodical than the *North Briton*.

The *North Briton* of that date was a resuscitation of Wilkes's celebrated periodical of the same name, which had been stopped in its 46th number; and it differed considerably from the ordinary newspapers of the day. It was of small folio size; and each number usually consisted of one careful essay and no more, occupying about six pages of clear and elegant type, and sold for twopence halfpenny. The editor and proprietor was a person named William Bingley, a printer, whose case was then much before the public. In 1768 he had resumed the publication of the *North Briton*, after it had been discontinued for some years. In that year, however, having been summoned as a witness in one of the trials between Wilkes and the Government, he had given a singular proof of his obstinacy by making oath in court that he would answer no

interrogatories whatever unless he should be put to the torture. (See *Junius*, Letter VII.) Committed for contempt to the King's Bench, he had remained there, utterly immoveable either by threats or by promises, for a period of two years, publishing his *North Briton* all the while, and dating it from his prison; till, at last, in the first week of June 1770, Government thought it best to let him out. As soon as he was released, he had started a second weekly newspaper, called *Bingley's Journal, or the Universal Gazetteer*, of the regular newspaper size and form, the first number of which appeared on the 9th of June. The new paper, however, was not to interfere with the *North Briton*. Both were to be issued every Saturday, at the same price, from Bingley's new premises at the Britannia, No. 31 Newgate Street.

A connection with Bingley must have been thought of some importance by Chatterton; and it is another proof of his energy that, before Bingley was out of prison a fortnight, he had contrived to obtain such a connection. Above all, to have his letter to Beckford brought out in large fine type in the *North Briton*, forming by itself one entire number of that paper, must have seemed to Chatterton a decided step of literary promotion.

The elation which Chatterton felt at the idea of the publication simultaneously of two letters of his to the Lord Mayor in such important prints as the *Political Register* and the *North Briton*, and at the prospects of farther recognition which would thus be opened up to him, was doomed to a bitter disappointment. After May he seems to have written next to nothing of a political character for the *Middlesex*, but to have waited for the appearance of his letters and the *éclat* he anticipated from them. One of them did appear—that written first, and sent to the *Political Register*. It was published in that periodical in the course of June, and bore the signature of 'Probus.' But, before the other could appear, an event happened which made it impossible that it should appear at all. On the 21st of June, 1770, Beckford died. His death was sudden, the consequence of a cold, which an imprudent journey of 100 miles had aggravated into rheumatic fever. The town was thunderstruck, and for some days. nothing else was talked of. Only a month before had been that crowning triumph of his life, his presentation of the City Remonstrance to the King : the applauses of that act were still loud ; and London and all England had been expecting no end of similar manifestations of spirit from the bold Lord

Mayor. Little wonder that the excitement over his death was for the time enormous.

Gradually the excitement died away. Beckford's only legitimate son, then a boy of nine years, afterwards to be known far and wide as the author of *Vathek*, stepped into the inheritance of his father's vast fortune, the wife being amply provided for by her settlement; several illegitimate children at the same time received £5,000 each; and the City people began to think which of the popular aldermen they should elect for the vacant term of the Mayoralty. But what of poor Chatterton, to whom, with his two letters, and the hopes he had built upon them, the continuance of Beckford's life had been more necessary than to all the City besides? 'When Beckford died,' Mrs. Ballance told Sir Herbert Croft, Chatterton, 'was perfectly frantic and out of his mind, and said that he was ruined.' This is probably correct; and yet there is an authentic little record from which it appears that, after his first frantic regret was over, he tried to console himself ironically in a somewhat singular fashion. On the back of the identical letter which has been mentioned as having been sent to the *North Briton*, but which, as it could not now appear there, Chatterton had recovered and sent in manuscript to his friend Cary, there is an endorse-

ment in Chatterton's hand, evidently for Cary's amusement, as follows—

'Accepted by Bingley.—Set for, and thrown out of, the *North Briton*, 21st June, on account of Lord Mayor's death:

| | £ | s. | d. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Lost by his death on this Essay . . . . | 1 | 11 | 6 |
| Gained in Elegies . . . . £2 2 0 | | | |
| ,, in Essays . . . . £3 3 0 | | | |
| | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| Am glad he is dead by . . . . . | 3 | 13 | 6' |

So far as we are aware, this is the first time that grief was openly estimated in pounds, shillings and pence. The method, however, has some merits, and might, without much injury to truth, come into more general use.

Beckford's death seems to have had one not unimportant effect on Chatterton's literary exertions. Even before his interview with Beckford, as his letter to his sister of the 30th May shows, he had begun to have doubts as to the advantages of mere political writing—at any rate, of political writing on the Opposition side and for the newspapers. For essays of that kind, he says, one was sure of pay; but the benefit ended there. The 'patriots' being all in search of place for themselves, there was little chance of any further remuneration for articles on their side than the publisher's payment for the copy! On the other hand, if one wrote for the Ministerial

side, no publisher would take the articles, and one must pay to have them printed; but then, if one could make a hit, the Ministerial men would be glad of such a recruit, and could easily make it worth his while to serve them! And then follows the maxim, so characteristic of the miserable boy, 'He is a poor author who cannot write on both sides,' with the statement that, if necessary, he will put this maxim in practice by transferring himself to the Court-party. There is evidence that he actually made an attempt to carry the intention into effect. On that very 26th of May on which he penned the letter that was to appear in the *North Briton*, lauding Beckford and the patriots for their opposition to Ministers, he penned also another letter—afterwards found among his papers—addressed to Lord North, and signed 'Moderator,' in which, according to Walpole, he passed 'an encomium on Ministers for rejecting the City Remonstrance.' It was probably, therefore, the consciousness of having written those two letters on the same day that caused him to write to his sister so coolly about taking either side; and what he says about the difficulty of getting Ministerial essays published may have been but the result of his own experience with regard to the 'Moderator' letter. Evidently, however, after his introduction of himself

to Beckford, he had resolved to wait the issue of that experiment before taking any farther steps towards the Ministerial side. But, when Beckford died, and all his hopes from that acquaintanceship were over, his conviction of the uselessness of mere political writing in newspapers, especially if on the patriotic side, came back with fresh force.

There was independent reason why it should be so. Since the end of May there had been a panic among the newspaper-proprietors. As early as the beginning of that month, we have seen, Edmunds of the *Middlesex Journal* had been prosecuted by Ministers and committed to Newgate. And this was but the beginning of a series of similar prosecutions. After the City Remonstrance of the 23rd of May, and Junius's terrible letter in the *Public Advertiser* of the 28th, ripping up the conduct of the Parliament just prorogued, and lashing Ministers for all their recent misdemeanours, including the massacre at Boston, the insult to the City, and the escape of the murderers of Bigby, Ministers seem to have made up their minds for a crusade against the Opposition press. On the 1st of June Mr. Almon of the *London Museum*, a friend of Wilkes, was tried in Westminster Hall before Lord Mansfield for circulating a letter of Junius's in that publication;

on the 13th, a greater culprit, Woodfall of the *Public Advertiser*, was tried at the King's Bench on a similar charge; and on the 13th of July Mr. Miller, of the *London Evening Post*, was tried for copying a letter by Junius into his columns. All this had some effect. The proprietors of newspapers began to be chary of printing articles which might be their ruin. Thus, during the month of June, Chatterton seems to have found it impossible to get such articles into the *Middlesex Journal* as had been willingly taken from him in May. 'The 'printers of daily publications,' he writes to Cary on the 29th of June, 'are all frightened out of their 'patriotism, and will take nothing unless 'tis moderate 'or Ministerial. I have not had five patriotic essays 'this fortnight: all must be Ministerial or entertain-'ing.' Accordingly, still keeping in reserve the possibility of becoming 'Ministerial' if he should see reason for it, he in the meantime falls back on the 'entertaining': *i.e.*, on miscellaneous non-political literature. And this leads us to a separate question. What were Chatterton's literary exertions during his first two months in London apart from his political letters for the newspapers?

From the very first he had by no means depended exclusively on political writing. In his letter to his

mother of the 6th of May he says, 'I get four guineas a month by one magazine, and shall engage to write a History of England and other pieces, which will more than double that sum'; and he clearly distinguishes in the same letter between employment of this kind and 'occasional essays for the daily papers.' Again, in his letter to his sister of May 30th, he speaks of an engagement with a speculative bookseller, the brother of a Scotch Lord, who was to give him board and lodging for writing a History of London, to appear in numbers. How much of these statements about engagements to write large historical compilations for the booksellers was actual fact, founded on proposals that passed between the eager youth and the bibliopolic powers of Paternoster Row and its purlieus, and how much of it was mere hallucination, one cannot now say. Of schemes of this sort, at all events, we hear nothing more; and whatever chances of literary work, as distinct from ordinary newspaper-writing, Chatterton did have in London were limited to his connection with various magazines.

We are able to enumerate all the magazines with which, during the months of May and June, Chatterton is known to have had dealings. First, and by far the most hopeful, as regarded receipts for his

exchequer, was the *Town and Country*, to which he had been a pretty constant contributor since its second number in February 1769. This magazine, which had a very large sale, was published on the last day of every month, at the price of one shilling; and, though the editor and proprietor, Hamilton, must have been rather surprised when his Bristol correspondent presented himself in his office, at St. John's Gate, Clerkenwell, to find him so young, he appears to have behaved civilly, and to have allowed Chatterton to regard the magazine as one of his surest resources now that he had settled in town. Next there was the *Freeholder's Magazine*, somewhat more political in its character and also published on the last day of each month, price sixpence. With this also Chatterton had been in correspondence before leaving Bristol; and we have seen that during his first ten days in London he was disposed to regard it, and its editor, Mr. Fell, as his mainstay. After Fell's imprisonment, however, when the magazine went into other hands—the hands, as appears from an advertisement of the ninth number (that for May 1770), of a certain 'patriotic society,' who employed W. Adland and J. Browne of Red Lion Court, Fleet Street, to print it for them—Chatterton says less of it than his letter of May 14th had prepared us

to expect. Of greater consequence now in his eyes was the *London Museum*, a shilling monthly, which was printed, as has been said, by J. Miller, of Queen's Head Passage, and which in May 1770 had attained its fifth number. Next was the *Political Register*, already described. After it may be mentioned *The Court and City Magazine*, price sixpence, six numbers old in May 1770, printed by J. Smith of 15 Paternoster Row, and characterised in the advertisements as 'a Fund of Entertainment for the Man of Quality, the Citizen, the Scholar, the Country Gentleman, and the Man of Gallantry, as well as the Fair of every denomination.' This magazine had plates, as indeed some of the others had; and, from the advertised contents of one or two numbers, one infers that the light amatory vein was deemed the most attractive by the publishers. Lastly, there was the *Gospel Magazine*, begun in 1768, and printed and sold in 1770 by M. Lewis, of No. 1 Paternoster Row. This magazine, the purpose of which, as stated on its title-page, was 'to promote religion, devotion, and piety from evangelical principles,' usually consisted, if one may judge from the contents of a few numbers, of scraps of sermons and short religious biographies, followed by a few pieces of religious verse.

The editors of Chatterton's Remains, after his

death, were not so careful as they might have been in recovering his contributions to the various London magazines, or even in giving the exact dates and references of those which they did recover. The task, in any case, was not an easy one. Chatterton adopted various signatures, and some of his contributions may have appeared, as was then common, without any signature at all. It is possible, therefore, that trifles which have been assumed as his were not really his; and it is far more possible that trifles which he did write have been neglected. On the whole, we may give the following as a list of at least the chief of Chatterton's appearances in the periodicals mentioned, from his arrival in London to the end of June 1770:—

In the *Freeholder's Magazine* for May 1770 appeared a portion of the long satirical poem entitled 'Resignation,' with an editorial note promising the sequel in a future number.—This fact, first made public in the Aldine Edition of Chatterton's works (1875), had been ascertained for that edition by Mr. Edward Bell, together with the other interesting fact already mentioned (*ante* p. 119, footnote).

'Narva and Mored, an African Eclogue,' in verse, dated May 2, 1770: published in the *London Museum* for May.

'Elegy' beginning 'Why blooms the radiance': dated 'Shoreditch, May 20,' and published in the *Town and Country Magazine* for May.

'The Prophecy,' a political poem in eighteen stanzas: published in the *Political Register* for June 1770.

'The Death of Nicou, an African Eclogue,' in verse: dated 'Brooke Street, June 12,' and published in the *London Museum* for June.—The dating, it will be seen, is proof positive that Chatterton had removed to Brooke Street early in June.

'Maria Friendless,' a short tale in prose: dated 'June 15,' and published in the *Town and Country Magazine* for June.

'The False Step:' a short prose tale, published in the same number of the *Town and Country Magazine.*

'Anecdote of Judge Jeffries': a short paragraph, published in the same number of the *Town and Country Magazine.*

'To Miss Bush of Bristol': a lyric in six stanzas, published in the same number of the *Town and Country Magazine.*

A Paper signed 'Hunter of Oddities,' dated 'Slaughter's Coffee-house, June 15,' and describing the conduct of a mad gentleman seen there: published in the same number of the *Town and Country Magazine.*—This was the fourth of a series of papers, all bearing the same signature, and having the same object—namely, the description of odd characters encountered in walking about London. There are about twelve papers in all in the series, extending over all the numbers of the magazine for 1770. Chatterton was certainly the author of some of them; and, though the rest were published after his death, and even dated after it, this may have been only the editor's way of using copy with which Chatterton had supplied him.

'Elegy on W. Beckford, Esq.,' in twelve stanzas.—This, published somewhere before the end of June, has figured in editions of Chatterton as his sole metrical recognition of Beckford's death. But see next page.

If this list were extended by the addition of scraps from the same periodicals which look as if they were Chatterton's, and of similar scraps from the *Court and City Magazine*, the *Gospel Magazine*, etc., it might perhaps be more than doubled. We know, for example, that Chatterton must have written more on Beckford's death, both in verse and in prose, than the elegy above-mentioned amounted to. He estimated his earnings from this topic at five guineas. Indeed, it was in connection with this topic that he made the only venture towards independent publication of which there is any record. In the *Middlesex Journal* of July 3rd there is the following advertisement—'This day was published, price one shilling, an Elegy on the much-lamented death of William Beckford, Esq., late Lord Mayor of, and Representative in Parliament for, the City of London: Printed by G. Kearsly, at No. 1 Ludgate Street.' A copy of this publication has survived; and, on comparing it with the Elegy of Chatterton mentioned above, it is found to be the same, but with sixteen additional stanzas. Here are the opening stanzas—

'Weep on, ye Britons! give your gen'ral tear;
But hence, ye venal—hence each titled slave!
An honest pang should wait on Beckford's bier,
And patriot Anguish mark the patriot's grave.

'When like the Roman to his field retired,
'Twas you (surrounded by unnumber'd foes)
Who call'd him forth, his services required,
And took from age the blessing of repose.'

Whether Chatterton gained any part of his five guineas by this publication, or whether he lost some part of them by the venture, we do not know. The Elegy is as good as was going, but is poor enough; and perhaps it did not sell.

But we have not yet taken account of *all* Chatterton's efforts to make money and win fame during his first two months in London. Besides writing political articles for the newspapers, and miscellaneous scraps of a more literary kind for the magazines, he made, as we gather from his letters, a distinct effort towards connecting himself with what may be called generally the minor dramatic literature of the metropolis.

Within a month after his arrival in London, it has again to be noted, the two great theatres of Drury Lane and Covent Garden were closed for the season. But, though those great theatres were shut, one or two smaller summer theatres were open. At the Haymarket there was about to be brought out, for the delight of the town, Foote's comedy of *The Lame Lover*, perhaps the greatest theatrical hit of that year; and Sadler's Wells was also in its glory. Whatever

dreams of future work for those established houses may have crossed Chatterton's mind, there was as yet, of course, no means for realising them; and all that his ambition did conceive as within its reach for the present was the chance of becoming connected with one or other of those places of evening pastime in the open air which competed with the minor theatres for the right to entertain the residue of the London population that was still in town during the summer and autumn months. Of these there were three of some note: Ranelagh Gardens, at Chelsea; Vauxhall Gardens, on the Surrey side of the Thames, over against Millbank; and Marylebone or Marybone Gardens, on the site of part of the present New Road. At all these places the entertainments consisted of promenading under brilliant lights, hearing concerts of music, sipping tea and coffee or more expensive beverages, and seeing, at the close, fine displays of fireworks. Any hope that Chatterton could entertain of contributing to the bill of fare that had thus to be provided at every one of the places named could consist only in his ability to furnish words for the musical or dramatic portion of the entertainment. Now, it did so happen that he had an opportunity of showing this ability more especially in connection with the Marylebone Gardens.

There is no reason to doubt the literal accuracy of his account to his mother, on the 14th of May, of the accidental manner in which the connection was brought about. 'Last week,' he says, 'being in the 'pit of Drury Lane Theatre, I contracted an imme- 'diate acquaintance (which you know is no hard 'task to me) with a young gentleman in Cheapside, 'partner in a music-shop, the greatest in the City. 'Hearing I could write, he desired me to write a 'few songs for him: this I did the same night, and 'conveyed them to him the next morning. These 'he showed to a doctor in music, and I am invited 'to treat with the doctor on the footing of a com- 'poser for Ranelagh and the [Marylebone] Gardens. '*Bravo, hey boys, up we go!*' For a while we hear no more of this bargain or its results; but, in the end of June, writing to Cary, who had apparently been already informed of all the particulars, he reports progress. 'A song of mine,' he then says, 'is 'a great favourite with the town, on account of the 'fulness of the music. You will see that and twenty 'more in print after the season is over. I yesterday 'heard several airs of my Burletta sung to the harpsi- 'chord, horns, bassoons, hautboys, violins, etc., and 'will venture to pronounce, from the excellence of the 'music, that it will take with the town.' If we inter-

pret this into the language of direct statement, the facts seem to be as follows;—Chatterton having, early in May, written some songs for some music-publisher who had an interest in Marylebone Gardens, one or two of these had already been set to music, and perhaps sung at the Gardens, in the course of one of the concerts, by Mr. Reinhold, Mr. Bannister, or Mrs. Barthelemon, who were then the Marylebone stars; and, these having pleased, he had made some kind of arrangement for a more extensive attempt, in the shape of a continuous Burletta, to be brought out at the Gardens as soon as might be convenient, and had already before the end of June finished this Burletta, handed it to the composer, and even had the pleasure of hearing some of the songs in it sung to the airs to which they had been fitted.

All this is corroborated by the evidence of Chatterton's remaining writings. For some five-and-twenty years, indeed, after his death, all traces of either his Burletta or the Songs seem to have been lost; but in 1795, the manuscripts having been recovered in the possession of Mr. Atterbury, who had been proprietor of Marylebone Gardens, they were edited in the form of a neat little pamphlet, having this title-page—'*The Revenge: A Burletta, acted at Marybone Gardens* 1770; *with additional*

*Songs*; *by Thomas Chatterton.*' Prefixed to *The Revenge*, there is this list of *dramatis personæ*—

| | |
|---|---|
| Jupiter . . . . . | Mr. Reinhold. |
| Bacchus . . . . . | Mr. Bannister. |
| Cupid . . . . . | Master Cheney. |
| Juno . . . . . | Mrs. Thompson. |

The natural inference is that the Burletta was actually performed at the Gardens. After looking over the newspapers for 1770, however, in which there is a pretty complete series of advertisements of the entertainments at the Gardens from the beginning to the end of the season, we have found no trace of any such Burletta as having been produced that year; hence we rather incline to think that, if the production took place at all, it was not till a subsequent season. Of five short Songs, however, printed along with the Burletta, it seems likely enough that one, entitled *A Bacchanalian*, and purporting to have been 'sung by Mr. Reinhold,' was actually sung by that gentleman at one of the mixed concerts; and it may be the very song respecting which Chatterton wrote to Cary. Another of the five, entitled *The Invitation*, has attached to it the words 'To be sung by Mrs. Barthelemon and Master Cheney,' as if it had not yet gone so far as the other. The remaining three

have no singer's name attached to them. Probably, however, to have had one Song actually sung at the Gardens, another about to be sung, and a Burletta in progress, seemed to Chatterton sufficient success. At all events, no sooner was one Burletta off his hands than he began another of a more modern dramatic character, entitled *The Woman of Spirit*, the several parts of which are distributed by anticipation thus—

| | |
|---|---|
| Distort . . . . . | Mr. Bannister. |
| Councillor Latitat . . | Mr. Reinhold. |
| Endorse . . . . . | Master Cheney. |
| Lady Tempest . . . | Mrs. Thompson. |

Of this intended Burletta only two scenes appear to have been written.

No one can read those dramatic attempts of the industrious boy without a new impression of his extraordinary cleverness and versatility. *The Revenge*, which is in two acts, and is written in rhyme throughout, partly in passages of recitative, but with numerous solo airs, one or two duets, and a chorus at the close, might really, if set to tolerable music, have been a pleasant piece to hear. The words are decidedly better than those of many of the musical burlesques that succeed now-a-days. The story is that of a quarrel between Jupiter and Juno on account of an assignation which Jupiter had made

with Maia; the plot is thickened by the introduction of Cupid and Bacchus; and, after the usual amount of confusion and cross-purpose, all ends happily. Here is a specimen—a dispute between Bacchus and Cupid respecting the relative worths of their diverse functions—

BACCHUS (*with a bowl*)

*Recitative.*—Od'sniggers, t'other draught; 'tis dev'lish heady;
Olympus turns about (*staggers*); steady, boys, steady!

*Air.*—If Jove should pretend that he governs the skies,
I swear by this liquor his Thundership lies;
A slave to his bottle, he governs by wine;
And all must confess he's a servant of mine.

*Air changes.*—Rosy, sparkling, powerful wine,
All the joys of life are thine;
Search the drinking world around,
Bacchus everywhere sits crown'd;
Whilst we lift the flowing bowl
Unregarded thunders roll.

*Air changes.*—Since man, as says each bearded sage,
Is but a piece of clay,
Whose mystic moisture lost by age,
To dust it falls away,
'Tis orthodox, beyond a doubt,
That drought will only fret it;
To make the brittle stuff hold out
Is thus to drink and wet it.

*Recitative.*—Ah! Master Cupid, 'slife, I did not s' ye;
'Tis excellent champagne, and so here's t' ye:
I brought it to these Gardens as imported;
'Tis bloody strong; you need not twice be courted;
Come, drink, my boy——

CUPID

Hence, monster, hence ! I scorn thy flowing bowl :
It prostitutes the sense, degenerates the soul.

BACCHUS

Gadso, methinks the youngster's woundy moral ;
He plays with ethics like a bell and coral.

*Air.*—'Tis madness to think,
To judge ere you drink :
The bottom all wisdom contains.
Then let you and I
Now drink the bowl dry ;
We both shall grow wise for our pains.

CUPID

*Recitative.*—Pray, keep your distance, beast, and cease you bawling,
Or with this dart I 'll send you caterwauling.

*Air.*—The charms of wine cannot compare
With the soft raptures of the fair ;
Can drunken pleasures ever find
A place with love and womankind ?
Can the full bowl pretend to vie
With the soft languish of the eye ?
Can the mad roar our passions move
Like gentle-breathing sighs of Love ?

BACCHUS

Go, whine and complain
To the girls of the plain,
And sigh out your soul ere she comes to the mind ;
*My* mistress is here,
And, faith, I don't fear :
*I* always am happy, *she* always is kind.

*Air changes.*—A pox o' your lasses !
A shot of my glasses
Your arrows surpasses ;
For nothing but asses
Will draw in your team.

Whilst thus I am drinking,
My misery sinking,
The cannikin clinking,
I'm lost to all thinking,
And care is a dream.

CUPID
Provoking insolence!

One would like to know, if possible, the exact pecuniary result for Chatterton of all those various exertions of his during his first two busy months in London: his political articles and essays, his miscellaneous poems and other literary trifles contributed to magazines, and his Songs and Burletta for Marylebone Gardens. The data for this calculation are contained in three small documents;—(1) On a scrap of paper found in his pocket-book there are these jottings—

| | £ | s. | d. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 'Received to May 23, of Mr. Hamilton, for *Middlesex* | 1 | 11 | 6 |
| ,, ,, of B——. . . . . | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| ,, ,, of Fell for *The Consuliad* [*i.e.*, for the long satirical poem with that title which Chatterton had sent from Bristol, and which had been published in the *Freeholder's Magazine* for January 1770; see *ante*, p. 119] . | 0 | 10 | 6 |
| ,, ,, of Mr. Hamilton for "Candidus" and "Foreign Journal" [paragraphs for the *Town and Country*?] . . . | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| ,, ,, of Mr. Fell [for the portion of "Resignation" printed in the *Freeholder's Magazine* for May? See *ante*, p. 201] . | 0 | 10 | 6 |
| ,, ,, *Middlesex Journal* . . . | 0 | 8 | 6 |
| ,, ,, Mr. Hamilton, for 16 songs . | 0 | 10 | 6 |
| | £4 | 15 | 9 |

(2) Another money document is that already quoted, giving an ironical account of the balance in his favour by Beckford's death, which is estimated at £3 13s. 6d. This may have been but one item in his receipts for June, though probably, from the nature of the topic, it was the most important item. (3) From a receipt in Chatterton's hand, accidentally recovered in 1824, it is inferred that he received, on the 6th of July 1770, the sum of five guineas from Mr. Atterbury of Marylebone Gardens, in payment for his Burletta.——On the whole, allowing for uncertainties in the construction of those documents, and for the probability that some of the calculated earnings, including even part of the elegiac £3 13s. 6d., remained unpaid, we shall probably be correct if we say that Chatterton's total receipts during his first two months in London cannot have exceeded £10 or £12, and that, if he had Mr. Atterbury's five guineas in hand early in July, he had nothing else then left with which to face the rest of that month.

Chatterton was singularly abstemious in his personal habits. He drank only water, and would rarely eat animal food, assigning as his reason that 'he had work on hand and must not make himself more stupid than God had made him.'

His receipts, therefore, small as they were, would probably have satisfied all his ordinary wants for a considerable time. But there were other respects in which he did not deny himself. 'I employ my money now,' he wrote to his sister on the 30th of May, 'in fitting myself fashionably, and getting into good company,' *i.e.* going to coffee-houses, the gardens, the theatres, etc. Add to this the little presents sent home to his mother and sister, and it will not be difficult to see how, even without supposing any extravagance, the end of his second and the beginning of his third month in London should have found him in some such state as we have imagined. Still, there was as yet no appearance of despondency in Chatterton as to his future. What he had spent in dress and 'getting into good company' was sure to bring him in interest; and each succeeding month would bring its own earnings! If money flowed as fast as honours upon him, he would give his sister a portion of £5,000! That day might be still distant; but, at least, he could look forward to the time when his mother and sister should leave Bristol and join him in London, where he could take apartments for them and himself. Then how happy they should be, all three together, walking out on Sundays to Hampstead or Kensing-

ton, when the heaven over London *should* begin to glow and blush with the burning beneath it of that hard-to-kindle but still surely combustible river, and the whole town, his mother and sister included, should gaze at the crimson air and see *his* portrait and the letters *T.C.* freaked in keener fire in the heart of the crimson! Dream on, poor boy, for the end is not yet.

It will have been observed that, all this while, in his ceaseless efforts to become known in London, Chatterton had made no use of his Antiques. Of at least one of those modern satirical pieces of his which he had brought with him to town from Bristol —that called *The Consuliad*—he had contrived to make something; but, though he must have had his tragedy of *Ælla* with him, his fragment of the tragedy of *Goddwyn*, his *Tournament*, his *Battle of Hastings*, and others of his Rowley Poems, he seems to have made no attempt to get *them* published Indeed, his only allusion, after his arrival in London, to the Rowley Poems at all is in his remark, in his letter to his mother of May 14, that, if Rowley had been a Londoner, instead of a 'Bristowyan,' he could have lived by copying Rowley's works. Couple this remark with his

injunction in the same letter, repeated in his letter to his sister of May 30, to be careful to send him his MS. Glossary of obsolete English words; and it seems impossible to avoid the conjecture that he was then meditating some more distinct trial of his Antiques, or some of them, in the London literary market. One small piece of evidence in confirmation of this conjecture will be produced in time; meanwhile one wonders what would have been the effect if he had been able to try the London public with his Rowleian masterpiece, *Ælla*, fresh from his lodging in Brooke Street. Fancy Johnson, Goldsmith, Warton, and the rest of them, reading *that*! The London antiquarians of that day may be supposed to have been to the Bristol ones, in respect of perspicacity, as hawks to doves; but what a fluttering there would have been even among the hawks! Would it have been better for Chatterton had he made that attempt? Who can tell? On the one hand, by refraining from it, he moved to a fate sad enough; on the other, he might have lived on a hardened literary liar.

## CHAPTER IV

### BROOKE STREET, HOLBORN

CHATTERTON had been in his new lodging in Brooke Street now for about three weeks. During that time he had become pretty well acquainted with his landlady, Mrs. Angell, and with her husband, Frederick Angell, who seems to have been engaged in some kind of business which took him from home during the day, leaving his wife to her dressmaking. Always of social habits and willing to converse with those about him, Chatterton seems now and then to have sat with Mr. and Mrs. Angell of an evening, talking with them. The impression he made on them appears to have been much the same as that made on the Walmsleys of Shoreditch. Sir Herbert Croft, indeed, who made repeated attempts, some years afterwards, to see Mrs. Angell, in order to learn from her all he could about her strange lodger of 1770, never succeeded in finding her. She was then, he tells us, in distressed circumstances, very suspicious of all visitors,

and unable to imagine what motive there could be for the calls with which she was assailed, unless it might be something of a police nature, or some molestation for debt. In default of Mrs. Angell, however, Sir Herbert found a neighbour and acquaintance of hers, 'Mrs. Wolfe, a barber's wife,' living two doors off on the same side of the street. She remembered Chatterton, and spoke of 'his proud and haughty spirit,' adding that 'he appeared both to her and to Mrs. Angell as if born for something great.' Thomas Warton, whose interest in the controversy as to the authenticity of the Rowley Poems led him to similar inquiries about Chatterton personally, discovered, in 1781 or 1782, yet another person who had been a resident in Brooke Street in 1770 and had known Chatterton there. This was a Mr. Cross, an apothecary. His information was to the effect that Chatterton, dropping in at his shop, and familiarly talking with him over the counter, had, almost from the first day of his residence in Brooke Street, struck up an acquaintwith him. Cross, who, from his profession, was probably a man of some intelligence, had begun to contract a real liking for his odd visitor, and 'found his conversation,' as he afterwards told Warton, 'a little infidelity excepted, most captivating.'

So the month of July opened, Chatterton going out and in as usual, and sitting up late at night in his room among the tiles, still in high spirits, if not so fresh as at first, and still with some money in his pocket, if only part of the five guineas for his Burletta which he received on the 6th of the month. What use he had made of part of that money appears touchingly from his next letter home, dated July 8th, and sent, with a box, by the Bristol coach or carrier:—

'DEAR MOTHER,—I send you in the box——

'Six cups and saucers, with two basins, for my sister. If a china tea-pot and cream-pot is, in your opinion, necessary, I will send them; but I am informed they are unfashionable, and that the red china, which you are provided with, is more in use.

'A cargo of patterns for yourself, with a snuff-box, right French, and very curious in my opinion.

'Two fans:—The silver one is more grave than the other, which would suit my sister best. But that I leave to you both.

'Some British herb-snuff in the box—be careful how you open it. (This I omit, lest it should injure the other matters.) Some British herb-tobacco for my grandmother, with a pipe. Some trifles for Thorne. Be assured, whenever I have the power, my will won't be wanting to testify that I remember you.—Yours,

'T. CHATTERTON.

'*July* 8, 1770.

'N.B.—I shall forestall your intended journey and pop down upon you at Christmas.

'I could have wished you had sent my red pocket-book, as 'tis very material.

'I bought two very curious twisted pipes for my grandmother; but, both breaking, I was afraid to buy others, lest they should break in the box, and, being loose, injure the china. Have you heard anything further of the clearance? Direct for me at Mrs. Angell's, sack-maker, Brooke Street, Holborn.'

From his giving his address at the end of this letter it is perhaps to be inferred that he had not till now acquainted his mother with his change of lodging. Probably, as has been hinted, he still called at Walmsley's for his letters. This would account for Mrs. Ballance's knowing his state of mind on the occasion of Beckford's death.

The next letter, written to his sister three days after the last, is partly a continuation of it; but it contains some references to his literary occupations of the past month, and his expectations for the month just begun :—

'Dear Sister,—I have sent you some china and a fan. You have your choice of two. I am surprised that you chose purple and gold. [Was this for the fan or for some one of the other presents?] I went into the shop to buy it; but it is the most disagreeable colour I ever saw—dead, lifeless, and inelegant. Purple and pink, or lemon and pink, are more genteel and lively. Your answer in this affair will oblige me. Be assured that I shall ever

make your wants my wants, and stretch to the utmost to serve you. Remember me to Miss Sandford, Miss Rumsey, Miss Singer, etc. As to the Songs, I have waited this week for them, and have not had time to copy one perfectly. When the season's over, you will have them all in print. I had pieces last month in the following magazines: *Gospel Magazine*; *Town and Country* (viz. 'Maria Friendless,' 'False Step,' 'Hunter of Oddities,' 'To Miss Bush,' etc.); *Court and City*, *London*; *Political Register*, etc. *The Christian Magazine*, as they are not to be had perfect, are not worth buying. [This Magazine, begun in 1760, and carried on till 1767, had some celebrity as having been edited by Dr. Dodd; and probably his sister or some one else had been inquiring about it.]—I remain yours,

'T. CHATTERTON.

'*July* 11, 1770.'

The next, also to his sister, is nine days later, and it was the last but one that she and her mother were to receive from him:—

'I am about an Oratorio, which, when finished, will purchase you a gown. You may be certain of seeing me before the 1st of January, 1771. The clearance [from Mr. Lambert] is immaterial. My mother may expect more patterns. Almost all the next *Town and Country Magazine* is mine. I have an universal acquaintance: my company is courted everywhere; and, could I humble myself to go into a compter, could have had twenty places before now. But I must be among the great; state-matters suit me better than commercial. The ladies are not out of my acquaintance. I have a great deal of business now, and must therefore bid you

adieu. You will have a longer letter from me soon, and more to the purpose.—Yours, T. C.

'20*th July*, 1770.'

Those three letters, giving us glimpses as they do of Chatterton at three successive points in the month of July, carry us over nearly the whole of that month. It is necessary, however, to examine them a little in the light which subsequent facts cast upon them.

It is evident, at least, that in the beginning of that month Chatterton was not in want of money. The presents sent to his mother, sister, and grandmother, seem to have been rather costly for a youth in his circumstances. They probably left him with so little that, had it been known at home how disproportionate to his means had been those proofs of his affection, the pleasure in receiving them would have been mixed with anxiety and fear. Clearly, however, from the first it was Chatterton's pride to convey to his mother and sister the idea that he was getting on splendidly; and probably it was part of his chief delight, in sending the presents, to fancy how they would be exhibited on the widow's table to her acquaintances, how Lambert, Barrett, Catcott, and the rest would hear of them, and what

inferences, reflecting on their own inability to appreciate a youth of genius, those Bristol pettifoggers would draw from them! Still, great as were Chatterton's affection and pride, it is not to be conceived that he would have actually impoverished himself in gratifying them, unless at the time he had been convinced that he had such prospects of continued work as would at least supply him with what was absolutely necessary for his own subsistence. Unfortunately, when we look carefully at the second and third of the letters, we begin to perceive a kind of consciousness creeping through that he had, at the time of writing the first, been too sanguine in this respect. There are the same bragging generalities as in the earlier letters of May and June—extremely 'busy,' 'an universal acquaintance,' his company 'courted everywhere,' etc.; but there is no such profuse mention as in those earlier letters of specific shifts and contrivances in reserve against the coming weeks, and of actual engagements on hand. He tells of his great doings in last month's magazines; but, when he condescends on the business of the month then passing, all that he says is that his Songs, which he had expected to see in copper-plate by this time, were still not out, that he had begun an Oratorio, and that Hamilton had so

much of his copy that nearly the whole of the forthcoming *Town and Country Magazine* would be his. We hear nothing of farther work for the *Middlesex Journal*, for the *Political Register*, for the *London Museum*, or for any of the other periodicals. In short, it is too plain that by the end of July Chatterton was in want of work and had begun to know it.

One can see various reasons why Chatterton should somewhat suddenly have found himself in this predicament, without resorting to the supposition—though there may be something in that too—that he and his bookselling patrons were not on such good terms as at first, and that by his incessant calling upon them he had begun to be regarded by them as troublesome.

The months of July and August, one remembers, were then, even more than now, about the slackest portions of the London year; and in the year 1770 they seem to have been even slacker than usual. It was the season of the Parliamentary recess, and of hot summer weather, when all who were not absolutely tied to town were away taking their holiday. Wilkes and his family, we find, were off to a watering-place on the southern coast, *en route* for the Continent. And so with other families in the same

station, — some north, some west, some south, according to their tastes and opportunities. The Margate hoys were in full activity, conveying their annual freights of sea-sick London tradesmen, with their wives and children, and packets of unnecessary sandwiches, to that greedy coast-town of Kent, where the lodging-house keepers had already raised their prices, and the bathing-machines were out on the beach, and all the shop-windows were exhibiting their plates of boiled prawns and shrimps, and the dancing saloons and petty theatres were in full play. Even men who were never happy out of the London streets yielded to custom and forsook them now. The taverns and coffee-houses had little to do. The clubs were all broken up, and their scattered atoms were wandering melancholy among green fields, smelling the fresh hay, amusing the farmers by their ignorance of crops, and saying it was so pleasant to get away from town, but really longing for the time when they should again come together in their familiar rooms in the courts round about Temple Bar, and sit down, reconstituted for another year, to their punch, their gossip, and their oysters.

So it was with the famous Club of the Turk's Head, Gerard Street. Where Garrick, Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and the rest of the club, were

rusticating, we do not know; but we can trace the great Doctor Samuel, and his familiar Goldy.

Johnson, whom Bozzy had left with regret in the previous November in order to go back to Scotland and settle down as a married man, had produced nothing this year except his Tory pamphlet on the Wilkes question entitled *The False Alarm*; the effect of which had been to procure him no end of abuse from the Opposition writers, and to fill the Opposition papers with paragraphs about his pension. In the midst of this unpopularity he had been living on as usual, and making preparations for a new edition of his 'Shakespeare.' But in the end of June,—the poet Akenside had died on the 23rd of that month, and his body was then lying in its coffin in his house in Burlington Street,—Johnson did as others were doing and went out of town. His purpose was to visit his native Lichfield, and other parts of the midland counties. During a considerable portion of the month of July he was at Lichfield, whence, as we learn from Mr. Croker, he wrote two letters to Mrs. Thrale at Streatham. In one of these, dated the 11th of July,—the day on which Chatterton wrote the second of the foregoing letters from Brooke Street,—we find him informing Mrs. Thrale that he was going about in his native town 'not

wholly unaffected by the revolutions' that had taken place in it since he remembered it, and, in particular, taking considerable interest in a book recently found by Mr. Greene, an apothecary of the town, which showed 'who paid levies in our parish, and how much they paid, above an hundred years ago.' 'Many families,' he says, 'that paid the parish rates are now extinct, like the race of Hercules. *Pulvis et umbra sumus.* What is nearest touches us most. The passions rise higher at domestic than at imperial tragedies.' Thus moralising about Lichfield and its vicinity, the ponderous and noble man remained out of town apparently about three months in all; for it is not till the 21st of September that we are sure of his being again back in his well-known quarters in Johnson's Court.

Through a portion, at least, of this same period, Goldsmith was also absent from town. His *Deserted Village* had appeared this year, on the 26th of May, and may, therefore, have been read by Chatterton in the first week of his residence in Brooke Street. Three new editions were called for in the course of June; and it was with the pathos of that exquisite poem fresh in his heart, and its pictures of rural peace and beauty in contrast with the crowded anguish of cities still vivid in his fancy, that Gold-

smith, in the middle of July, permitted himself to be taken off on a short continental tour, as one of a party made up by his friends the Miss Hornecks. Precisely at the time when Chatterton was writing his last letters home, and beginning to see want staring him in the face, was this kindest of Irish hearts taking leave for a while of Brick Court and all its pleasant cares. Ah me! so very kind a heart it was that one feels as if, when it left London, Chatterton's truest hope was gone. Goldsmith never saw Chatterton; but one feels as if, had he remained in London, Chatterton would have been more safe. Surely—even if by some express electric communication shot at the moment of utmost need under the very stones and pavements that intervened between the two spots—the agony pent up in that garret in Brooke Street, where the despairing lad was walking to and fro, would have made itself felt in the chamber in Brick Court. Then the tenant of that chamber would have been seized by a restlessness and a creeping sense of some horror near; he would have hurried out, led by an invisible power; and, by the grace of God, Brick Court and Brooke Street would have come together! Oh the hasty excited gait of Goldsmith as he turned into Brooke Street: the knock; the rush upstairs; the garret door burst

open ; the arms of a friend thrown round the friendless youth ; the gush of tears over him and with him ; the pride melted out of the youth at once and for ever; the joy over a young soul saved! Phantasy all, phantasy all! what *might* have been is one thing; what *has* been is another. In those late days of July, when Chatterton was beginning to foresee the worst, Goldsmith, having escaped the little mishaps of his journey, in the society of the 'Jessamy Bride' and her sister, from London to Dover, from Dover to Calais, from Calais to Lille, and from Lille to Paris, was going about in Paris seeing the sights, but longing, even in such sweet company, to be back in London again, and getting very nervous on account of his arrears of work. He was in Paris on the 29th of July, and remained there some time. Latterly the party was joined by a person who rather spoiled the pleasure of it for Goldy,—a certain attorney, Mr. Hickey ; who would persist in quizzing Goldy before the ladies, and who afterwards brought home the story that, when the party went to Versailles, Goldy, in order to prove himself right in saying that a certain distance beyond one of the fountains was within a leap, actually took the leap and fell into the water. All August Goldy had to bear his absence from London, the thought of his arrears of work, and

the jokes of Mr. Hickey. Not till the first week in September was he back in town.

But, though Goldsmith, Johnson, Wilkes, the legislators of the country, and all the families of the wealthier tradesmen were out of town on their annual holiday, the town was not empty. A host of citizens of all classes remained behind on duty, tiding over the languid season as best they could, keeping their windows open to abate the heat of the afternoon sun as it beat on the brick houses, and strolling out of an evening, if they could, to enjoy the cooler air of the parks, and the green suburbs round. And these, of course, still constituted 'the town'; and 'the town,' even in the languid season, *will* have its excitements and its topics of gossip. Thus, in London, in the months of July and August 1770, though there was a comparative lull in politics, consequent on the preternatural excitement of the first half of the year, there was still matter of interest for the newsmongers. On the 29th of June Alderman Trecothick had been elected, after a somewhat brisk contest in the City, to succeed Beckford in the Mayoralty; and on the 12th of July the place of Beckford, as representative of the City in Parliament, was filled up, after similar opposition, by the election, in the old City fashion, of Alderman Oliver. These elections,

affording room as they did for new trials of strength between the Wilkesites and the Court party, were not regarded with indifference; and indeed it was not till the second of the two was over that Wilkes himself left town. Then there was a good deal of interest among the City people about the proposed statue to Beckford, and motion after motion on the subject was discussed at the Common Council. The trial of Mr. Miller of the *London Evening Post* for re-publishing Junius's letter did not come on till the 13th of July, and gave rise to new arguments respecting the liberty of the press and the conduct of Lord Mansfield. A trial of a different character, and far more *piquant* for the town at large, was that of his Royal Highness the Duke of Cumberland in an action for damages brought against him by the husband of a certain lady of high rank. The jury awarded £10,000 of damages, greatly to the delight of the town. For many weeks the newspapers, other matters not being abundant, lived on this trial, reporting the proceedings at great length, commenting on them, and printing piece by piece the letters that had passed between the aristocratic lovers. When cloyed with this delicious literature, citizens and their apprentices who were in search of amusement could avail themselves of the Haymarket and Sadler's

Wells Theatres, or of one or other of the public Gardens. Foote at the Haymarket was drawing crowds by his *Lame Lover*; and at the Marybone Gardens the favourite pieces were *The Magic Girdle* and *Serva Padrona*. By way of morning relish after such evening dissipations, the citizens could hear of robberies committed over-night, and particularly of robberies of the post-boys carrying the mail-bags to and from London. Robberies of this class were unusually common at the time, so that the post-boys never set out without making up their minds to the chance of meeting a highwayman. One post-boy who was robbed, the papers informed their readers, was fifty years of age.

Attending to all this news from *his* hot lodging in narrow Brooke Street, with a view to extract occupation for his pen out of it, Chatterton, as we have said, had begun to find the task a very hard one. No doubt he went about the streets with his eyes and ears open, and entered the coffee-houses to see what he could pick up there in the shape of information or suggestion. No doubt he called frequently at the office of the *Middlesex Journal*, and made proposals to Bingley of the *North Briton* for essays in lieu of the cancelled one on Beckford, and similar proposals to the *London Museum*, the

*Court and City Magazine*, and the *Political Register*. But, whether it was that some of the printers and editors were out of town, or that they were overstocked already and disposed to retrench, or that they had ceased to care for having Chatterton's contributions in particular, certain it is that all those efforts were fruitless. On the *Town and Country Magazine* alone had he any hold. 'Almost all the next *Town and Country Magazine* is mine' he had said to his sister on the 20th of July; and this was, in reality, the sum-total of his literary dependence for that month. We have looked over the July number of the magazine, in order to verify the statement. The following is a list of its contents—

'1. State of Europe for July; 2. *Character of Eolus, by a Hunter of Oddities; 3. Anecdote of Young Reynard; 4. An original letter from a Tutor to his r——l pupil; 5. Letter from an Irish Fortune-hunter; 6. History of the Tête-à-tête, or Memoirs of Tom Tilbury, etc.; 7. Amusing and instructive Questions; 8. Remonstrance from the Secretary of the Female Coterie; 9. Particular Details in the Trials of the Printers for publishing Junius's Letter; 10. Sergeant's Glynn's Argument (in the same case) at large; 11. Lord Mansfield's Charge (in the same case); 12. The Folly of Despair—a moral Tale; 13. The Danger of Deceit; 14. Singular Resolution of a Married Lady; 15. The Theatre, No. XVIII.; 16. A most comic Scene from the *Lame Lover*; 17. Trial of his R. H. The Duke of C——; 18. Letters of the D—— of C—— and

Lady ——; 19. Mr. Wedderburne's Argument and Mr. Dunning's Reply; 20. Charge on a late remarkable Trial; 21. The Gardener's Kalender for July; 22. Character of Peter the Great; 23. Reflections on the Characters of Cæsar and Addison; 24. *Memoirs of a Sad Dog, Part I.; 25. *The Polite Advertiser, by Sir Butterfly Feather; 26. A Defence of Lady ——, by a Member of the Female Coterie; 27. Experiments on certain Dissolvents for the Stone; 28. Account of New Books, etc.; 29. Mathematical Questions and Answers; 30. Poetical Pieces; 31. Foreign Affairs; 32. Domestic Intelligence; 33. Births, Marriages, Deaths, Bankrupts, etc.'

Of these articles, only the three that are marked with asterisks are identified as Chatterton's by the editors of his Remains. It is possible, however, that he wrote some of the others. Still, on any supposition, his contributions to the number form but a small proportion of the entire contents. This fact may, to some extent, be reconciled with his statement in anticipation to his sister by supposing that, though he had supplied Hamilton with copy enough to fill a much larger space in the magazine, Hamilton had, contrary to expectations, published only a small portion of it, and reserved the rest for future numbers. It is certain, at least, that papers by Chatterton did continue to appear at intervals in the future numbers of that year. Thus

in the August number (published, it must be remembered, on the last day of August) there appeared not only the second part of the *Memoirs of a Sad Dog*, but also a paper on *The Origin, Nature, and Design of Sculpture* (to accompany an engraving of a design for Beckford's statue) and a tale called *Tony Selwood*, both written by Chatterton. These, we imagine, with other pieces published still later, were all in Hamilton's hands in time for the July number; but he divided the *Sad Dog* into two, so as not to give the public too much of him at a time, and he found it convenient to postpone the rest.

The *Memoirs of a Sad Dog*, as being one of the largest of Chatterton's prose pieces, and as having been written at the period when he was beginning to despond, deserves some notice. They are the imaginary autobiography in brief of one Harry Wildfire, who, having been left five thousand pounds by his frugal father, sets about spending it at a fast rate. First he lost one of his thousands in gambling; and the remainder soon went in successive debaucheries. Reduced to his last penny, he then throws himself on his brother-in-law, Sir Stentor Ranger, a country knight, whose ideas are limited to horses, but who, having some rough natural kindliness, forthwith instals his reprobate relative in the post of chief

of his stables. Sir Stentor sometimes has visitors at his old place, and among these is 'the redoubted Baron Otranto' of antiquarian celebrity; who, poking about the house, falls in with what he considers a remarkable curiosity, in the shape of a stone with an old inscription in Gothic letters. This he deciphers with great pains as '*Hic jacet*' the '*corpus*' of somebody or other of the thirteenth century,—the fact, known to all the stable-boys, being that the stone was taken from a neighbouring churchyard, and was nothing more than the memorial of an honest couple, James Hicks and his wife. After living with Sir Stentor two years, and making some money on the turf, Wildfire recommences his old career, and carries it on till he is again ruined, when, as a last shift, he comes to town, and betakes himself to literature. At the moment of his writing his sad narrative, he says, he is 'throned in a broken chair within an inch of a thunder-cloud.'—Such is the story. The writing is slipshod in the extreme, and the spirit deplorably coarse; nor is there any merit in the construction. The sole interest it has consists in a certain evidence it furnishes of rough satirical force, and in an occasional passage, like that on Walpole, bearing on the author's own life and circumstances. Thus, the

hero, after describing one of his periods of good fortune, breaks out in mock heroics as follows—

'But, alas! happiness is of short duration; or, to speak in the language of the high-sounding Ossian, "Behold thou art happy; but soon, ah! soon, wilt thou be miserable. Thou art as easy and tranquil as the face of the green-mantled puddle; but soon, ah! soon, wilt thou be tumbled and tossed by misfortunes, like the stream of the water-mill. Thou art beautiful as the Cathedral of Canterbury; but soon wilt thou be deformed like Chinese palace-paling. So the sun, rising in the east, gilds the borders of the black mountains, and laces with his golden rays the dark-brown heath. The hind leaps over the flowery lawn, and the reeky bull rolls in the bubbling brook. The wild boar makes ready his armour of defence. The inhabitants of the rocks dance, and all nature joins in the song. But see! riding on the wings of the wind, the black clouds fly. The noisy thunders roar; the rapid lightnings gleam; the rainy torrents pour; and the dripping swain flies over the mountain, swift as Bickerstaff, the son of song, when the monster Bumbailiano, keeper of the dark and black cave, pursued him over the hills of death and the green meadows of dark men."—Oh, Ossian! immortal genius! what an invocation could I make now! But I shall leave it to the abler pen of Mr. Duff, and spin out the thread of my own adventures.'

The conclusion of the piece is even more specific. Mr. Wildfire, from his 'broken chair within an inch of a thunder-cloud,' thus details his brief experience of authorship in London—

'The first fruits of my pen were a political essay and a

piece of poetry. The first I carried to a patriotic bookseller, who is, in his own opinion, of much consequence to the cause of liberty; and the poetry was left with another of the same tribe, who made bold to make it a means of puffing his magazine, but refused any gratuity. Mr. Britannicus [Bingley of the *North Briton*?], at first imagining that the piece was not to be paid for, was lavish of his praises, and, I might depend upon it, it should do honour to his flaming patriotic paper; but, when he was told that I expected some recompense, he assumed an air of criticism, and begged my pardon; he did not know the circumstance, and really he did not think it good language or sound reasoning!—I was not discouraged by the objections and criticisms of the bookselling tribe; and, as I knew the art of Curllism pretty well, I made a tolerable hand of of it. But, Mr. Printer, the late prosecution against the booksellers having frightened them all out of their patriotism, I am necessitated either to write for the entertainment of the public or in defence of the Ministry. As I have some little remains of conscience, the latter is not very agreeable. Political writing on either side of the question is of little service to the entertainment or instruction of the reader. Abuse and scurrility are generally the chief figures in the language of party. I am not of the opinion of those authors who deem every man in place a rascal, and every man out of place a patriot. Permit this, then, to appear in your universally-admired magazine: it may give some entertainment to your readers, and a dinner to your humble servant, HARRY WILDFIRE.'

This, we fear, was but too true a description of Chatterton's own circumstances while he was writing. He too was 'throned in a broken chair within an

inch of a thunder-cloud,' and had come to the extremity when too literally the purpose of giving entertainment to his readers was bound up with that of obtaining means for his own next dinner. But it was not, as in the case of his imaginary hero, 'the monster Bumbailiano' that was pursuing him over the hills of death and the green meadows of dark men. It was a more fearful monster still, — the monster Want, without any bailiff as harbinger. No imaginary five thousand pounds had *he* wasted; no writs were out against *him*; else, probably—for debt, though negative property, still *is* a kind of property, and functions as such to the advantage of its possessor—it might have been better for him! He was but a poor widow's son of Bristol, who had been working like a slave for three months in London to obtain the barest livelihood, and now found that even that was failing him.

Hamilton, at best, must have been a stingy paymaster. If we may judge from the rate of his previous payments—two shillings for two paragraphs, and half a guinea for sixteen songs—Chatterton's receipts from him for his July contributions can have gone but a very little way, even if they had not been spent in anticipation before the month was over. It seems also clear enough that,

if Hamilton did pay punctually according to his miserable tariff, he was resolute against solicitations for an advance on the faith of future work, or even of manuscript on hand. Accordingly, through the latter half of July we are to fancy Chatterton almost at his last shilling. No visits any longer, are we to fancy, to the theatres and the gardens; visits to the coffee-houses, if made at all, conducted on the most parsimonious scale; no purchases of articles of dress as at first; his very shoes, if we could see the soles, worn through, so that the dust gets in as he walks, and if it rains his feet are wet! As he walks out, it is this consciousness of his shuffling and poverty-stricken appearance that most distresses him; and it is a part of his meditations, as people pass him, whether they remark it. Probably what he cares far less about is that, in the privacy of his lodging, he lives chiefly on bread and water.

And so out and in, out and in, through all the late days of July, wanders the poor youth, growing daily more wan and haggard: out in the morning, or about mid-day, on his daily round among the publishing and editorial offices near, the doors of which begin to be shut against him, or, farther still, on his aimless ramble into the suburbs and the sequestered places of the parks, where methinks I

sometimes see him weeping under trees; and then, fatigued and fevered, back again in the evening to his lodging, where he sits up nearly all night, scribbling hopelessly his 'Harry Wildfires' and similar things, or sometimes merely gazing hour after hour at the empty grate. The biographers of Schiller tell how people, going to a kind of bank or high ground behind the poet's house at Weimar, could see him stalking up and down in his lighted room till long after midnight, engaged in poetical composition, every now and then sitting down to write what he had just completed in thought, and helping himself freely to wine, or to coffee with wine in it, to maintain his frenzy. Had the watchman of Brooke Street stood opposite that window among the tiles, the light of which he must have noticed burning so long after all the others were dark, he, too, might have seen the shadow of a poet pass and repass. But there was a difference between the two cases. In the one, it was a famous and noble man, to whose nerves the world would willingly permit wine or spices, or whatever else might be necessary that they might thrill productively; in the other, it was a poor boy, not yet eighteen, living on a crust and water, and writing that he may get more of that. There he sits! The short July night passes; the

light of the morning breaks over the city, paling that by which he is writing; he looks up, to be aware that another day has come, that people are moving about the streets, and that the sparrows are chirping along the eaves.

July is gone, and it is now the month of August, There is no better hope. Indeed, the prospect is worse. The last driblet of money from Hamilton on account of July is exhausting itself as former driblets have done; and, Hamilton having already enough of his copy on hand, there is no demand for any new copy for the August number of the *Town and Country*. All other magazines and periodicals are closed as before. If he writes at all, it must be on pure speculation.

So much probably had become known to him before August was ten days old. Mercifully it is not given to us to know the history of those ten days. Out and in, out and in, every day twenty-four hours long, and each of those hours to be gone through somewhere and somehow,—that is the substance of the history, even if it could be told. He has ceased to write home, and they can only guess there what he is doing. Rather than that the truth should be known in Bristol, and that, after all his boasting, the jest of his total failure

should go round among his friends there, he will die of starvation!

One communication with Bristol, though not of the frankest, he does seem to have been driven to in his extremity. The thought, we have seen, of obtaining a clerk's place or some similar situation in a counting-house in London had more than once occurred to him, and also the thought of getting some kind of appointment that would take him abroad. To this last notion in a somewhat modified form he had returned. Fond, when in Bristol, of reading medical books, which Barrett used to lend him, he had picked up, as he himself thought, a considerable smattering of medical knowledge; and, in consequence perhaps of something that had passed in conversation between him and the apothecary Cross, it had occurred to him as possible that he might obtain an appointment as surgeon or surgeon's mate on board of some ship. How he proposed to manage it we cannot say; but in those days 'the experienced surgeons' that ships carried, especially African ships, were in many cases without the qualification of any regular diploma. Chatterton, at all events, was prepared to doctor any crew that would take him. As a first step towards trying for such an appointment, he thought it worth while to

apply to Barrett for some kind of certificate or testimonial which he might show to owners of vessels. This he appears to have done directly in a letter sent to Barrett; but he also did it indirectly in the course of a letter to Catcott, written on the 12th of August. The second letter is extant. It is evidently an answer to one which Catcott had sent to him.

'LONDON, *August* 12, 1770.

'SIR,—A correspondent from Bristol had raised my admiration to the highest pitch by informing me that an appearance of spirit and generosity had crept into the niches of avarice and meanness: that the murderer of Newton, Ferguson [James Ferguson, the mechanician, who had written an exposition of Newton's Philosophy] had met with every encouragement that ignorance could bestow; that an episcopal palace was to be erected for the enemy of the Whore of Babylon [Bishop Newton of Bristol], and the present turned into a stable for the ten-headed beast; that a spire was to be patched to St. Mary Redcliffe, and the streets kept cleaner; with many other impossibilities. But, when Mr. Catcott (the *Champion* of Bristol) doubts it, it may be doubted. Your description of the intended steeple struck me. I have seen it, but not as the invention of Mr. ——. All that he can boast is Gothicizing it. Give yourself the trouble to send to Mr. Weobley's, Holborn, for a view of the Church of St. Mary de la Annunciation at Madrid, and you will see a spire almost the parallel of what you describe. The conduct of —— is no more than what I expected. I had received information that he was absolutely engaged in the defence of the Ministry, and had a pamphlet on the stocks which was to have been paid with a translation [*i.e.*, to a new see; for it is clearly Dr. Newton,

Bishop of Bristol, that is meant]. In consequence of this information, I inserted the following paragraph in one of my "Exhibitions" [newspaper squibs so named]:—"*Revelation unravelled* by —— : The Ministry are indefatigable in establishing themselves; they spare no expense so long as the expense does not lie upon them. This piece represents the tools of the Administration offering the Doctor a pension, or translation, to new-model his treatise on the Revelation, and to prove Wilkes to be an Atheist."

'The Editor of *Baddeley's Bath Journal* has done me the honour to murder most of my hieroglyphics, that they may be abbreviated for his paper. Whatever may be the political sentiments of your inferior clergy, their superiors are all flamingly ministerial. Should your scheme for a single row of houses in Bridge Street take place, conscience must tell you that Bristol will owe even that beauty to avarice; since the absolute impossibility of finding tenants for a double row is the only occasion of your having but one. The Gothic dome I mentioned was not designed by Hogarth. I have no great opinion of him out of his ludicrous walk; *here* he was undoubtedly inimitable. It was designed by the great Cipriani. The following description may give you a faint idea of it.—From an hexagonal spiral tower (such as I believe Redcliffe is) rose a similar palisado of Gothic pillars, three at a cluster in every angle, but single and at equal distance in angular spaces. The pillars were trifoliated (as Rowlie terms it), and supported by a majestic oval dome, not absolutely circular (that would not be Gothic), but terminating in a point, surmounted with a cross, and on the top of the cross a globe.—The last two ornaments may perhaps throw you into a fit of religious meditation, and give rise to many pious reflections. Heaven send you the comforts of Christianity! *I* request them not; for I am no Christian. . . .

'I intend going abroad as a surgeon. Mr. Barrett has it in his power to assist me greatly by *his* giving me a physical character. I hope he will. I trouble you with a copy of an Essay I intend publishing.—I remain your much obliged humble Servant, THOMAS CHATTERTON.

'Direct to me at Mrs. Angell's, sack-maker, Brooke Street, Holborn.'

Aha! What words were those that one heard? 'Heaven send you the comforts of Christianity! *I* request them not; for I am no Christian!' The whole letter, with its hollow, mocking bitterness, and its cool architectural details penned by one who knew himself to be on the brink of starvation, has for us an air of horrible irony; but these words, flung into it so carelessly, complete the impression, and convert the horrible into the ghastly.

'I am no Christian.' The words are simple, strong, and straightforward. What do they mean? They mean that he, a youth of seventeen years and nine months, born in a town in the west of England, bred up there as an attorney's clerk, and now lodged in a London garret, without food to eat, has, by dint of reading and reflection, come to the conclusion that the Divine One who died in Judæa nineteen hundred years ago, and whom all the generations of men in the fairest lands of the world since have been

worshipping as the Son of God, and building temples to, and believing in as their Lord and Saviour, was in reality no such thing or being, but, at the utmost, a wise and holy Jew. They mean that he, this same English stripling, has, in virtue of this conclusion, come to regard all that part of the past history of nineteen centuries which had proceeded on the belief in Christianity as so much human action, grand perhaps in itself, but done in pursuit of an illusion. They mean that, looking about him upon all the apparatus of bishops, churches, and schools, established in the service of this belief, he could view it with a smile, as a fabric with no foundation, piled up by ancient zeal, and cemented by time, custom, and the necessities of social arrangement. They mean that, remembering the names of great men, recently or anciently dead, who had nourished their souls in this belief, and clung to it through grown manhood to grey old age, and died serene in it, and left their testimonies to it as their most solemn words to the world, he could yet account for all this to himself by supposing that those men were and would have been noble anyhow, and that only the special form of their nobility was due to this intense grasp they had taken of Humanity's largest hallucination. They mean more.

They mean that he, the boy of Bristol, was decidedly of opinion, with Voltaire and others, that, though the earth had rolled on for ages, a brown ball spinning in the azure, and freighted with beings capable of weal and woe, all longing, as by the one sole law of their constitution, to hear some voice from behind the azure, no such voice had really spoken, nor any tongue of light from the outer realms of mystery ever struck the surface of the planet, either in Judæa or elsewhere. They mean that the world did not seem to him at all to rest certainly on any rule of love, but to be possibly only an aggregate of beings, more or less clever, more or less miserable, and more or less rich, jostling together and working on to some end, though no one could say what. They mean that in the matter even of Immortality, or a future world in continuation of this, he had no absolute certainty; that sometimes he might have a glimpse of such immortality as possible, but that again the glimpse would vanish quite, and it would seem to him that when a man died there might very well be an end of him, and that, should the earth itself ever meet a sufficient catastrophe to destroy all the life upon it at once, there would be some risk of an end to the race too, and to all the accumulated memories and maxims of its sages and

Shakespeares, and all the vast lore of its libraries. Sometimes, indeed, he might have his new doubts on this, and might think both of individual life as continued, and of the collective wisdom of the world as safe against any catastrophe, and sure, should the earth itself be cracked in pieces or shrivelled to a scroll, to take wing elsewhither at the moment of the last shriek, and prolong itself somewhere and somehow to the further issues of the Universe. But, at all events, for the Heaven and Hell of the Christian he could have no belief left; and, if a poor wretch, weary of the world, did think fit to kill himself, his soul, if he had one, could fare none the worse in the future life for the one act of rushing suddenly into it!

There is abundant proof, in scores of passages in Chatterton's writings, and in his recorded conversations with his friends among the young men of Bristol, that, after the peculiarities of that coarse and scoffing fashion of infidelity which had crept over so much of English society in his day, and which was represented in such men as Wilkes, he had substantially accustomed himself to the above method of regarding the Christian religion. It is unnecessary to multiply quotations to illustrate his way of speaking of Methodists, preachers like

Whitefield, and priests in general. Here is one, selected as being comprehensive—

> 'Tis mystery all: In every sect
> You find this palpable defect;
> The axis of the dark machine
> Is enigmatic and unseen;
> Opinion is the only guide
> By which our senses are supplied.'

Now, it was of supremely little consequence to Christianity that one precocious lad the more had taken this attitude of hostility to it. But it was of some consequence to the lad himself. There are and have been many—and these men in our Parliaments and in other high places—who might in a certain sense use Chatterton's phrase, 'I am no Christian,' and probably, in using it, speak the exact truth, and yet who never do use it, but leave it to their loud-mouthed critics to make the inference for them. One has to distinguish, therefore, between the sceptic who finds no occasion for asserting this negative side of his views at all and the sceptic who is vehement in proclaiming the negative. The second is in a different stage intellectually, and morally in a more restless predicament. He is always proclaiming his independence of a certain class of considerations, and yet he is always meddling with them. So it was with Chatterton. In his

statement 'I am no Christian,' and his spasmodic variations of it through his writings, one sees him fascinated by the very creed toward which he is malignant, so that he cannot avoid making it the topic of his thoughts. It is as if he saw that he had parted with certain beliefs the very pretence of which, the very habit of even nominally professing them, was a safeguard to those who were capable of it. It is as if he were conscious of one check less upon his own course to ruin than even ordinary youths around him had. Nay more, said at the moment at which they were said, his words to Catcott are a proof that the writer has again been, for some reason or other, catechising himself on the subject to which they refer. He has been turning one sarcastic look more, as it were, in his depression and despair, to those 'comforts of Christianity' the efficacy of which, in such circumstances, he has all his life heard mentioned; and the result is that he finds they will not suit him, and remits them to Mr. Catcott.

Well, but was there no equivalent? If the Christian has a source of faith and hope that the world knows not of, and that bears him up, as nothing else could, in times of worldly distress and trial, still it is known by universal experience that,

in such times of worldly distress and trial, men who are not Christians do not uniformly break down. That fervid and impassioned man of majestic thought and gait, people do not call him a Christian: they call him a Pantheist, or a Philosopher, or something of that sort; and yet, were he at his last shilling or his last crust, were the rack prepared for him and the multitude howling for his destruction, every one knows that he would endure and come through. *Si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinæ.* He believes in Justice, and God, and the Everlasting! Nay more, that tough little fellow, all grey iron and scepticism, whose very principle it is that there is no Everlasting, and that men ought 'to apprehend no farther than this world and square their lives according': he too, unless his antecedents belie him, might be beaten a long time between any size of hammer and any shape of anvil; he, too, could come through. Why, since the beginning of the world people have been coming through! Quiet, plain scholars have lived, before now, in German or in Scottish University towns, on boiled peas-cods for months, or a single guinea a quarter earned by teaching, without saying much about it. Had youths of this type been in Chatterton's place in London in August 1770, they would

have most probably survived the crisis. They would have availed themselves gratefully, and yet honestly, of such small immediate aid as those aunts and other relatives that we hear of so slightly in Chatterton's letters (one of them a carpenter, who had married one of his aunts) might perhaps, though poor, have willingly offered at the sharpest moment of the emergency; and, even that failing, they would have conquered by sheer patience. How was it, then, in Chatterton's case—the 'comforts of Christianity' being placed out of the question?

Chatterton never would call himself an Atheist. In a time when Wilkes and other contemporaries, whose language he sometimes borrowed, carried on their outrages on Christianity very much in that character, Chatterton, by the very structure of his genius as a boy of ardour and imagination, retained something in him of a poet's reverence for the sublime and the awful. In express anticipation, in one of his satirical poems, of the stigma of Atheism, he says—

> 'Fallacious is the charge; 'tis all a lie,
> As to my reason I can testify.
> I own a God, immortal, boundless, wise,
> Who bid our glories of Creation rise;
> Who form'd his varied likeness in mankind,
> Centering his many wonders in the mind.'

And, again, in one more solemn soliloquy, on which

one may dwell with peculiar interest as perhaps in its kind the highest utterance by the poor boy of what was best in him, and which reminds one of similar outbreaks of religious feeling in the writings of Burns and Byron—

'O God, whose thunder shakes the sky,
Whose eye this atom globe surveys,
To Thee, my only rock, I fly;
Thy mercy in Thy justice praise.

'The mystic mazes of Thy will,
The shadows of celestial light,
Are past the power of human skill;
But what the Eternal acts is right.

'O teach me, in the trying hour
When anguish swells the dewy tear,
To still my sorrows, own thy power,
Thy goodness love, thy justice fear!

'If in this bosom aught but Thee
Encroaching sought a boundless sway,
Omniscience could the danger see,
And Mercy look the cause away.

Then, why, my soul, dost thou complain?
Why drooping seek the dark recess?
Shake off the melancholy chain,
For God created all to bless.

'But ah! my breast is human still;
The rising sigh, the falling tear,
My languid vitals' feeble rill,
The sickness of my soul declare.

'But yet, with fortitude resign'd,
I 'll thank the Inflicter of the blow,
Forbid the sigh, compose my mind,
Nor let the gush of misery flow.

'The gloomy mantle of the night,
Which on my sinking spirit steals,
Will vanish at the morning light
Which God, my East, my Sun, reveals.'

Well for the poor fatherless boy had this mood been permanent! But, at the time of his extreme need, these comforts, even of such natural religion as he had, seem to have taken their flight too, and left him, mocking and bitter, face to face with despair.

Nor had Chatterton the resources to be found in rectitude and gentleness of mere worldly character. Impetuous, stormy, industrious, and energetic as he was, there was still in him an element of weakness in what he called his 'pride,' as well as in his open contempt for all the commoner forms of moral principle. Above all, he had in him the conscious sense of a past imposture, and of innumerable minor deceits practised in prosecuting it. Rowley, once the darling phantasm of his poetical imagination, now dogged him as a hateful demon, evoked by himself from the world of spirits, and not to be laid to rest. Wherever he moved, and in whatever form of new

labour or distraction he engaged, he could not look back over his shoulder but there was to be seen the form of this demon, in the garb of a Bristol monk of the fifteenth century, with his hideous old face under a cowl, grinning and gliding after him. In short, whether we view Chatterton's character as it naturally was, or those recollections of past lies and deceits with which he had burdened his conscience, so as to deprive his character of half its natural force, he was very likely to endure much, and yet to break down at a point where others in the same circumstances might have found longer endurance quite possible.

After all, however, the most material fact in the case remains to be told. Physical causes were at work. Bereft of the amount of actual food and of other comforts necessary, even with his abstemious habits, to keep body and soul healthily together; wandering about London in a perpetual state of fever and excitement; returning home to write night after night without rest or sleep: little wonder if he had overstrained his physical capabilities, and if brain and nerve began to fail in their office. Whatever taint of hereditary insanity was in him —derived from the old line of sextons who had jangled in past generations the keys of St. Mary's

Church in Bristol, and walked at midnight through its aisles, and dug the graves of its parishioners, or derived, more immediately, from that drunken, wild-eyed father whom he had never seen, but who used to tell his tavern-companions that he believed in Cornelius Agrippa the necromancer—it had at last come out in a way not to be mistaken. From his childhood there had been symptoms of it—his fits of weeping, his sudden paroxysms of passion, his long reveries when he gazed at people without seeming to see them, his frequent mutterings aloud. Not till now, however, had these traits passed the limits of what could be considered compatible with sanity. But now, almost certainly, those limits *were* passed. Noticing the strange, haggard lad walking about the streets, muttering perhaps to himself, or making sudden gestures, or staring at what was passing, sometimes vacantly, and sometimes with glances unusually keen and bright, even strangers could not but follow him with their eyes, and wonder who he was and where he came from. Had the observer been one accustomed to the ways of the insane, he would probably at once have pronounced that the lad's brain was affected. And, had the observer been able, with this idea in his mind, to pursue his inquiries farther, so as to

ascertain what peculiar form or species of insanity had taken possession of the lad, he would have found that it was that form which physicians recognise as the 'suicidal tendency.' Physicians, as all know, do recognise this as a form of madness; and, though they allow that a perfectly sane man may commit suicide after deliberate reasoning on the point, they attribute a large proportion of suicides to the action of a certain specific impulse which reason cannot overcome. In Chatterton's case, as we have seen, there had been premonitory appearances of the existence of this tendency. The idea of suicide had from the first been familiar to him.

Something like positive proof exists that before the month of August, 1770, was very far advanced Chatterton was actually in the specific maniacal condition which physicians recognise as capable of being induced by circumstances where there is a predisposition. Even in the letter to Catcott which we have quoted we see traces of over-excitement of brain, and of that morbid spirit of hatred to persons which results from it. There is a story also of a letter sent by him to his mother, on or about the 15th of August, which was written in such a

strain as to cause her very great anxiety. This letter—the last she ever received from him—is not extant; but Mrs. Edkins, the wife of a painter and glazier in Bristol, who lived long afterwards and communicated many particulars about the Chatterton family, distinctly remembered having been sent for by Mrs. Chatterton when the letter was received. She found Mrs. Chatterton 'in tears and very uneasy' on account of the contents of the letter, and particularly on account of one part of it, in which he told her a strange story of his walking among the tombs in a churchyard, and suddenly, in a fit of absent meditation, stumbling into an open grave. 'But,' added he, in his humorous way, 'it was not the quick and the dead together,' for he found the sexton under him, who was digging the grave! Mrs. Edkins tried to console Mrs. Chatterton by saying it was only 'one of his reveries'; but 'she could not be persuaded to consider it otherwise than as ominous.'

And so it proved. Barrett very properly refused to give Chatterton the certificate he wanted of competence for the situation of surgeon's mate on board an African ship; and the refusal was one disappointment the more added to those which were already preying upon him. His misery was almost

at its climax. Cross, whose repeated invitations to come and take a meal in his house in Brooke Street he had always hitherto declined, was rather surprised to find him one day, on being again pressed, consent. That evening he partook of a supper of oysters at Cross's house, and was observed, as Cross afterwards told Warton, 'to eat most voraciously.' For aught we know, it was the last meal he had. On the 22nd or the 23rd of August, at all events, he had reached that extreme beyond which our fancies of human destitution cannot go. Hope, patience, and all force of reason had finally forsaken him; and he was secretly bidding farewell to the world. Strange that at this very moment something was happening in his favour which, had he but known of it, might even then have roused him and determined him to live. The Rev. Dr. Fry, Head of St. John's College, Oxford, had by some means or other seen some of the antique Rowley Poems which had been circulating in Bristol, and, having conceived an unusual desire to know something more about them and their authorship, was on the eve of setting out for Bristol, to make inquiries about Chatterton, whom he supposed still to be there. Oh Dr. Fry, make haste; set out at once; life or death depends upon it! Dr. Fry, not knowing what we now know,

took his own time, and lived to regret it. He did make the journey, but it was too late.

The 23rd of August 1770 was a Thursday, the morning of which, according to the old London weather-registers, was 'hazy,' but the day itself 'fine.' That day is a dead blank in the tragic story. Whether Chatterton remained indoors all day, or took a ramble about the streets and returned in the evening as usual, no one can tell. Of the next day, Friday, the 24th of August,—'clouds, sunshine, and showers at intervals,' is the description of the day in the registers—one incident is recorded, on the faith of the information afterwards given to Sir Herbert Croft by Mrs. Wolfe, the barber's wife of Brooke Street. Her neighbour, Mrs. Angell, Chatterton's landlady, had told her that, 'as she knew he had not eaten anything for two or three days, she begged he would take some dinner with her on the 24th of August, but he was offended at her expressions, which seemed to hint that he was in want, and assured her (though his looks showed him to be three parts starved) that he was not hungry.' Possibly true; possibly only an invention of Mrs. Angell afterwards, or of Mrs. Wolfe for her, to save her character for motherly vigilance and humanity against too sore impeachments! Enough that on

that evening too, if Chatterton had again gone out for a ramble, Mrs. Angell heard him return, ascend the stairs, and reach his room. He entered, and locked the door behind him.——The Devil was abroad that night in the sleeping city. Down narrow and squalid courts his presence was felt, where savage men clutched miserable women by the throat, and the neighbourhood was roused by yells of murder, and the barking of dogs, and the cries of children. Up in wretched garrets his presence was felt, where solitary mothers gazed on their infants and longed to kill them. He was in the niches of dark bridges, where outcasts lay huddled together, and some of them stood up from time to time and looked over at the dim stream below. He was in the uneasy hearts of undiscovered forgers, and of ruined men plotting mischief. He was in prison-cells, where condemned criminals condoled with each other in obscene songs and blasphemy. What he achieved that night, in and about the vast city, came duly out into light and history. But of all the spots over which the Black Shadow hung, the chief, for that night at least, was a certain undistinguished house in the narrow street which thousands who now dwell in London pass and repass, scarce observing it, every day of their lives, as they go and come

along the thoroughfare of Holborn. At the door of one house in that quiet street the horrid Shape watched; through that door he passed in towards midnight; and from that door, having done his work, he emerged before it was morning.

On the morrow—Saturday the 25th of August—alarm having been caused by the protracted non-appearance of Mrs. Angell's lodger, his room was broken open, and he was discovered lying dead, having swallowed arsenic in water. 'His room, when they broke it open, after his death,' says Sir Herbert Croft, 'was found, like the room he quitted at Mr. Walmsley's, covered with scraps of paper.' There was a coroner's inquest; and Sir Herbert afterwards took the trouble, when he was pursuing his inquiries about Chatterton, to look out the Coroner, and question him as to the circumstances. The Coroner, however, had kept no minutes of 'the melancholy business,' beyond a memorandum that the witnesses had been Frederick Angell, a Mary Foster, and a William Halmsley (Walmsley?); nor, at the distance of time, could his memory recall any of the particulars. The verdict seems to have been *Felo de se*; and, in accordance with this verdict, the body, having been enclosed in a parish shell, was privately interred, the following day, in the burying-

ground attached to Shoe Lane Workhouse. This appears from the entry of the burial, under the date August 28th, in the parish registers of St. Andrew's, Holborn—the parish in which Brooke Street is situated, and the church and *consecrated* churchyard of which are close to Shoe Lane. Mr. Peter Cunningham noticed, as a coincidence, that the same parish-registers contain the entry of the baptism of Richard Savage on the 18th of January 1696-7; and he enhanced the coincidence by remarking that Savage was born in Fox Court, Brooke Street, close to the house where Chatterton died, and that he died in 1743 in the jail of the very City of Bristol where, nine years later, Chatterton was born.[1]

[1] In *Notes and Queries* for Feb. 5, 1853 (vol. vii., First Series, pp. 138-139) appeared what purported to be 'Account of the Inquest held on the body of THOMAS CHATTERTON, deceased, at the Three Crowns, Brooke Street, Holborn, on Friday, the 27th August, 1770, before Swinson Carter, Esq., and the following jury:—Charles Skinner, —Meres, John Hollier, John Park, S. G. Doran, Henry Dugdale, G. J. Hillsley, C. Sheen, E. Manley, C. Moore —Nevett.' In this document the witnesses examined were said to have been 'Mary Angell, of No. 17 Brooke Street,' 'Frederick Angell,' 'Edwin Cross, apothecary,' and 'Anne Wolfe'; and an abstract of the evidence of each was given. The document was communicated to *Notes and Queries* by John Matthew Gutch, Esq., of Worcester, formerly of Bristol, possessor of a large collection of papers relating to Chatterton and his writings; and Mr. Gutch stated it to be from 'a MS. copy' in his possession, never before published. In the first edition of the present Narrative in 1856, I pointed out certain suspicious circumstances about

Whether Chatterton's body remained in the Shoe Lane burying-ground, to be torn up, with the bodies of other paupers, fifty years afterwards, when Farringdon Market usurped the site, has been made a matter of controversy.

In or about the year 1808, George Cumberland, Esq., 'descendant of Bishop Cumberland, and a literary and highly respectable man,' was informed by Sir Robert Wilmot that at a basket-maker's in Bristol, whose name Sir Robert had forgotten, he

Mr. Gutch's document: *e.g.* the unauthenticated numbering of Mrs. Angell's house in Brooke Street as 17; the incongruity of parts of the report with Sir Herbert Croft's account of what he had been told by the Coroner; and, above all, the blunder of making the 27th of August, 1770, a 'Friday,' when it was really a Monday. Nevertheless, as Mr. Gutch's personal good faith was unimpeachable, I was not sufficiently on my guard against the document as a whole, but allowed the reported evidence of the four witnesses cited in it to affect my narrative somewhat in the particular chapter to which this note is appended, and especially to tinge my details of the closing days of Chatterton's life. Not long after the publication of my narrative, however, it came out distinctly that the professed report of the inquest was a sheer fabrication by an ingenious but unscrupulous person, who had worked upon hints derived from the authentic accounts of Sir Herbert Croft, Warton, and others, and bestowed the result on the unsuspecting Mr. Gutch. See exposure of the affair by Mr. W. Moy Thomas in *Athenæum* of Dec. 5, 1857, and a subsequent article in the same journal for Jan. 23, 1858. Accordingly, before reprinting the story in 1874, it became my duty to revise this particular chapter carefully, so as to remove from it every statement or suggestion derived from the tainted document. The changes so required were almost wholly omissions, and did not extend to more than a few pages of the chapter as originally printed; and I believe that the chapter, in its present form, is brought back, as I should like it to be, to the strict basis of authentic records.

heard it positively stated that Chatterton was buried in the churchyard of St. Mary Redcliffe. Sir Robert farther said that the statement was made to him in such a manner that he believed it. Mr. Cumberland thereupon instituted inquiries in Bristol, with a view to ascertain the truth of the story. For some time he could find no one who knew anything of the matter; but at last he traced the information to a Mrs. Stockwell, the wife of a basket-maker in Peter Street. Questioned on the subject, she stated that when a girl (apparently after Chatterton's death) she had been a pupil of Mrs. Chatterton's, and that she used to be frequently with her till she was twenty years old; that often she stayed with Mrs. Chatterton and slept with her; that she was 'very kind and motherly,' and told her many things she would not tell to most people—among others, 'how happy she was that her unfortunate boy was brought home and buried in Redcliffe.' This had been done, she said, 'through the attention of a relative in London, who, after the body had been cased in a parish shell, had it secured and sent to her by the waggon.' When the case arrived and was opened, the body was found 'black and half-putrid'; it was, therefore, interred immediately—this being done secretly by Phillips, the sexton,

who was a friend of the family, and extremely fond of Chatterton. Mrs. Stockwell farther stated that the grave was 'on the right hand side of the lime-tree, in the middle paved-walk in Redcliffe church-yard, about twenty feet from the father's grave, which was *in* the paved walk, and where Mrs. Chatterton and Mrs. Newton also lay.' She also recollected that Mrs. Chatterton had given leave to a person named Hutchinson or Taylor (she could not be sure which) to bury his child over her son's coffin, and was very sorry afterwards that she had done so, as this person had not only put a stone over the grave—which had formerly belonged to it, though it had been removed and placed against the church-wall—but had also subsequently buried his wife in the same grave, and on that occasion erased the old inscription on the stone to make room for a new one. This was all that Mrs. Stockwell could tell; but she mentioned to Mr. Cumberland that there was a Mrs. Kirkland, the wife of a Scotch naval man, who had formerly resided in Bristol, and been on such very intimate terms with Mrs. Chatterton in her old age that she was likely to know all about the burial. Cumberland, on inquiry, found that this Mrs. Kirkland had died about three months before, leaving a daughter somewhere in London,

whom he could not trace. But Mrs. Stockwell referred him to 'a hatter's wife' (name not given) who remembered Mrs. Kirkland, and had often heard her say that Chatterton was privately buried in Redcliffe churchyard. To make the matter more sure, Mr. Cumberland sought out the family of the sexton Phillips, who had himself died in 1772. He found his sister, a Mrs. Jane Phillips, still alive; and she told him that she had known Chatterton well, and that her brother, the sexton, whom Chatterton used to call 'uncle,' was much attached to the family. It was her brother that first told her the news of Chatterton's having killed himself in London; and, on hearing it, she had gone, against her brother's wish, to Mrs. Chatterton, in order to know more about it. She asked Mrs. Chatterton where her son was buried; and she replied 'Ask me nothing; he is dead and buried.' A daughter of the sexton, now Mrs. Stephens, the wife of a cabinet-maker, was also found by Cumberland and interrogated. She said her father had never told her anything of the burial in Redcliffe churchyard, and, 'if he had done it privately, it was not likely that he would tell her, being very reserved on all occasions'; but she thought 'he would not have refused, if asked, being attached to Chatterton and his mother.' She re-

membered the removal of a stone from the church-wall, and the erasure of the old inscription to make room for a new one, by a person named Hutchinson, whose wife had died. A brother of this Mrs. Stephens, a son of the sexton, and named Stephen Chatterton Phillips, was also seen by Cumberland. He was then a retired sailor with a wooden leg, and was said to have some resemblance to Chatterton in the face. He but corroborated what his sister had said: *i.e.*, he knew nothing of the burial, and 'his father was not likely to tell him, and yet might have done it.' Finally, Cumberland saw Mrs. Edkins, already mentioned as having been so intimate with Mrs. Chatterton. As a Miss James, she had been at the school kept by Chatterton's father, whom she remembered well; she had known Mrs. Chatterton then, and had been present afterwards at the birth of her son; and from the time of his birth, all through his schoolboy period and his apprenticeship with Mr. Lambert till he went to London, she had been continually seeing him and his mother. Some interesting particulars of Chatterton's early life were procured from her. As to the private burial, however, she was unable to say anything. She had gone to see Mrs. Chatterton immediately after the news came of her son's death. On entering, she found

Mrs. Chatterton in a fit of hysterics. She said she had come to ask about her health. 'Ay,' said Mrs. Chatterton, 'and about something else'; on which she burst into tears, and they cried together, and 'no more was said till they parted.'

All these facts or rumours, collected by Cumberland about 1808, were given by him to Cromek, the editor of 'Burns's Reliques,' who undertook to make farther researches and publish them. This was not done; and Cumberland's memoranda did not see the light till they were printed as an appendix to Dix's *Life of Chatterton* in 1837. Since that date they have received one slight corroboration. In the *Memorials of Canynge*, etc., published in 1854 by Mr. George Pryce, a Bristol antiquary, there is a short account of Chatterton; and in that account is included a letter written, in 1853, by the well-known Mr. Joseph Cottle of Bristol, in which he stated his belief that Chatterton was buried in Redcliffe churchyard. His reasons for the belief are thus stated: 'About forty years ago, Mr. George Cumberland called upon me and said, "I have ascertained one important fact about Chatterton." "What is it?" I said. "It is," said he, "that that marvellous boy was buried in Redcliffe churchyard." He continued—"I am just come from conversing

with old Mrs. Edkins, a friend of Chatterton's mother. She affirmed to me this fact, with the following explanation : — Mrs. Chatterton was passionately fond of her darling and only son, Thomas ; and, when she heard that he had destroyed himself, she immediately wrote to a relation of hers (the poet's uncle, then residing in London), a carpenter, urging him to send home his body in a coffin or box. The box was accordingly sent down to Bristol ; and, when I called on my friend Mrs. Chatterton to condole with her, she, as a very great secret, took me upstairs and showed me the box ; and, removing the lid, I saw the poor boy, whilst his mother sobbed in silence. She told me that she should have him taken out in the middle of the night, and bury him in Redcliffe churchyard. Afterwards, when I saw her, she said she had managed it very well, so that none but the sexton and his assistant knew anything about it. This secrecy was necessary, as he could not be buried in consecrated ground."' — Mr. Cottle adds that he knew the husband of Mrs. Edkins, who was a respectable painter and glazier.

There are discrepancies, it will be observed, between the account given in Mr. Cumberland's memoranda and that given by Mr. Cottle as his

recollection of what Mr. Cumberland had told him. But, in fact, there is such an air of incredibility about the whole story, despite its circumstantiality, that the conclusion that it has to be rejected is now all but unanimous. One might have *wished* to believe it, and to imagine the poor boy's bones as resting quietly within the hallowed precincts he loved so well, and where, since 1840, the piety of Bristol has raised a modest monument to his memory.

## CHAPTER V

### THE JUDGMENT OF POSTERITY

CHATTERTON'S death made little or no sensation in London beyond the immediate neighbourhood in which the inquest was held. We have looked over the newspapers of the time with some diligence; but, though paragraphs giving accounts of such casualties were as common then as now, we have not found any contemporary reference to the suicide in Brooke Street. The incident which figures in the newspapers as the chief metropolitan fact of the day on which the suicide occurred—*i.e.* the 24th of August—is the robbery at the foot of Highgate Hill of the boy carrying the Chester mail by 'a tall thin man in a light-coloured coat, mounted on a black horse.' Under the same date is recorded, as a somewhat minor incident, a visit paid by their Majesties to Woolwich to see the artillery. Even the *Town and Country Magazine*, which came out on the 31st of August with three contributions in it from the pen

of the unfortunate youth who was then no more (one of these the article *On Sculpture* which he had written to accompany the engraved design for Beckford's monument), takes no notice of the death of its correspondent. Doubtless, Hamilton knew the fact in time to notice it if he chose; but he may have had his own reasons for not doing so. Nor in the September number, which likewise contains some of Chatterton's writings, is the omission supplied. It was not till the October number that any notice of Chatterton occurred; and then it was in the form of an Elegy in twenty-three stanzas 'To the Memory of Mr. Thomas Chatterton, late of Bristol.' The Elegy is dated 'Bristol, October 1770,' and is signed 'T. C.'—evidently the initials of Chatterton's friend, Thomas Cary. The piece is written with more of genuine affection than of poetic skill; but two stanzas of it may be quoted—

> 'Think of his tender opening unfledged years,
> Brought to a final crisis ere mature,
> As Fate had grudged the wonders Nature rears,
> Bright genius in oblivion to immure.
>
> 'Weep, Nature, weep: the mighty loss bewail;—
> The wonder of our drooping isle is dead!
> Oh! could but tears or plaintive sighs avail,
> By night and day would I bedew my bed.'

In consequence, however, of such communications

as this from Bristol, and of the naturally increased interest that there could not but be there among the Catcotts and the Barretts in the Rowley manuscripts and other papers that Chatterton had left behind him—perhaps, too, of the researches of Dr. Fry and others, who obtained copies of those papers and began to send them about, and doubtless to some extent also of the casual references to Chatterton's fate made here and there by persons who had seen him in town—it is certain that before the winter of 1770-1 was far advanced the tragic death in the previous August of a certain youth of genius named Chatterton, a writer for the magazines and the alleged editor and transcriber of various pieces of ancient poetry, had become a topic of conversation in the literary clubs of London.

This was especially the case at the Gerard Street Club. Goldsmith had returned from his Parisian trip before the 8th of September: on which day his biographer, Mr. Forster, finds him receiving a new suit of mourning from his tailor, to be worn on account of the death of his old mother, of which he had received the news when in Paris. Johnson was also back in town before September was over. One of these two, most probably Goldsmith, having seen the Elegy in the *Town and Country* for October,

or having otherwise come across the story of Chatterton, made himself acquainted with the particulars; and thus Chatterton and the Rowley Poems came to be discussed at the Club. By this means it probably was that the Honourable Horace Walpole unexpectedly found himself, one day early in 1771, reminded of his Bristol correspondent of the year 1769. The occasion was in itself a somewhat memorable one. The first Annual Dinner of the Royal Academy was held on St. George's Day (April 23rd) 1771. At this dinner Sir Joshua Reynolds presided; and among the guests who sat under the pictures that were hung along the walls were almost all the distinguished men of London. Walpole, who was not in the habit of seeing much of Johnson, Goldsmith, and that set, elsewhere, found himself seated near to them. We will let himself relate the rest. 'Dining,' he says, 'at the Royal Academy, Dr. Goldsmith 'drew the attention of the company with an account 'of a marvellous treasure of ancient poems lately 'discovered at Bristol, and expressed enthusiastic 'belief in them, for which he was laughed at by 'Dr. Johnson, who was present. I soon found 'this was the *trouvaille* of my friend Chatterton; 'and I told Dr. Goldsmith that this novelty was

'known to me, who might, if I had pleased, have 'had the honour of ushering the great discovery to 'the learned world. You may imagine, sir, we did 'not all agree in the measure of our faith; but, 'though his credulity diverted me, my mirth was 'soon dashed; for, on asking about Chatterton, he 'told me he had been in London and had destroyed 'himself. The persons of honour and veracity who 'were present will attest with what surprise and 'concern I thus first heard of his death.' Said we not that, of all the men of letters then alive, the one that it might have been best for Chatterton to have near him was Oliver Goldsmith? After Chatterton was dead, Goldsmith, it now appears, was somehow the first to hear of him and to talk about him.

From that time through the next six or seven years, the interest in the Rowley Poems, and in Chatterton as connected with them, gradually increased. Catcott, as possessor of the greater portion of Chatterton's transcripts of the supposed antiques, had become a person of some consequence in the eyes of local antiquarians, and he took care to make the most of it. He had already increased his stock of MSS. by buying from Chatterton's mother, for five guineas, such of his papers as had been left with her—a proceeding by no

means to his credit, if it be true that about the same time he offered to sell his own collection for £70. Barrett, too, as the possessor of some copies of the supposed antiques, found himself inquired after. Both he and Catcott lent about copies of their manuscripts, some fragments of which got into print. The Bristol poems of the fifteenth century were frequently spoken of in literary circles in London. Warton, for example, was shown a collection of them in 1773 by the Earl of Lichfield, who asked his opinion of their genuineness. All sensible persons who had seen specimens of them had already made up their minds that they were forgeries; but many antiquarian zealots stoutly maintained the contrary. Whenever a literary man from the metropolis was in the neighbourhood of Bristol, he endeavoured, as a matter of course, to see Catcott and Barrett, and to get all possible information from them about Chatterton and his circumstances. They were very communicative on the subject, and spoke of Chatterton's talents, now that they had a kind of property in them, far more enthusiastically than they had done when he was alive; but they, and indeed nearly all Bristol, persisted in believing in the genuineness of the antiques. Chatterton, they said, was a youth of extraordinary genius; but he

could not have produced the poems in question! They were, they had no doubt of it, the works of the much older Bristol poet, Thomas Rowley, mysteriously preserved for three hundred years in the old chest in the muniment-room of St. Mary Redcliffe, and only brought to light by Chatterton! Thus, when in April 1776 Johnson and Boswell paid a visit to Bristol, and saw Catcott and Barrett, and were shown the original MSS., and Johnson read some of them aloud, Catcott, as Boswell tells us, stood by with open mouth, amazed at his scepticism; after which, to settle the matter, he led them in triumph to the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, and, by way of unanswerable argument, showed them 'the chest itself.' It was on this occasion that Johnson said to Boswell, speaking of Chatterton, 'This is the most extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge: it is wonderful how the whelp has written such things.' In connection with this same visit, it may be interesting to state that Hannah More,—who was still residing in Bristol with her sisters, a young woman of twenty-five, at the time of Chatterton's death,—had between that time and the date of Dr. Johnson's visit, added to the literary reputation of Bristol by the publication of her first dramas. In visiting

Bristol Johnson was therefore paying a compliment to this rising poetess, as well as to the memory of Chatterton. One is glad to know also that, if Hannah More, as one of the conductors of the best boarding-school for young ladies in Bristol, was almost necessarily out of the circle of Chatterton's acquaintances while he was going about in the city as an attorney's apprentice, she was one of the first in Bristol to show an interest in his fate after she did hear of him, and to prove that interest by being kind to his mother and sister. Mrs. Chatterton, after her son's death, was seized with a nervous illness, which, though she lived a good many years longer, never left her; and among those who used to go to see her and sometimes take tea with her, for her dead son's sake, there was none, Mrs. Stockwell said, whom she respected so much as Miss More.

It was in 1777 that the Rowley Poems were first published collectively, chiefly from the manuscripts in possession of Catcott and Barrett. A second and more splendid edition was published in 1782 by Dean Milles, President of the Society of Antiquaries, with the following title:—'*Poems supposed to have been written at Bristol in the Fifteenth Century by Thomas Rowley, priest, etc.*; *with a Commentary, in which the*

*antiquity of them is considered and defended by Jeremiah Milles, D.D., Dean of Exeter.*' Dean Milles, in his preliminary dissertation on the poems, gave a rather slighting account of Chatterton, with a view to show that he could not have been their author. Immediately on the publication of the volume, however, there blazed out a Rowley Controversy, as fierce as that which had attended the appearance of the Ossian Poems. Bryant and one or two others sided with Milles, and the question was argued and re-argued in every shape; but all the sound critical and antiquarian authorities, such as Malone, Tyrwhitt, and Warton, were on the other side, and their arguments, from evidence external and internal, set the question conclusively at rest in the minds of all who could be set at rest about anything. The collection and publication about the same time of Chatterton's acknowledged Miscellanies helped somewhat in the demonstration, by showing the *possibility* that their author might also have been the author even of things so extraordinary as the Rowley Poems. It was not till 1803, however, that the two sets of pieces were printed, together with additions, as the undoubted works of Chatterton. This first complete edition of Chatterton's works was undertaken in 1799 by sub-

scription, with a view to raise a sum for the benefit of his sister, then Mrs. Newton, his mother being by that time dead. Southey and Mr. Cottle of Bristol acted as the editors. The subscription not reaching the expenses of publication, an arrangement was made with Messrs. Longman in the interest of Mrs. Newton. According to what Mr. Cumberland heard in Bristol in 1808, the result of this speculation, and of other similar acts of kindness shown to the Chatterton family since the fatal year which had made them immortal, was that a sum of £600 came after Mrs. Newton's death to her only daughter, who had for some time been in the service of Miss Hannah More. This girl, the last of the Chattertons, died in 1807, leaving £100 to a young man, an attorney, to whom she was about to be married. The rest went to her father's relatives, the Newtons, living in London, somewhere about the Minories.

Enough has been already quoted from Chatterton's Acknowledged Writings in prose and in verse to give some idea of his ability and versatility as there shown. They are certainly astonishing productions for a boy not past his eighteenth year: astonishing for their very variety, and their precocious tone and manner, even where in substance they are most worthless.

He writes political letters for the newspapers, shallow enough, but as good as were going; he writes scurrilous satires in the Churchill vein, with here and there lines as good as any in Churchill and sometimes with turns of epigram reminding one of Pope; he writes very tolerable imitations of Macpherson's Ossian, and elegies and serious poems showing some power of thought and imagination; he catches the knack of magazine-articles, and scribbles them off *currente calamo*, of a kind to suit; he goes an evening or two to Marylebone Gardens, and straightway he writes a capital Burletta. On the evidence, then, of the Acknowledged Writings alone, Chatterton must be pronounced to have been a youth of singular endowments, who, had he lived longer, would certainly have made himself a name in the literature of England at the close of the last century and the beginning of the present. As the passages hitherto quoted from the Acknowledged Writings have, however, been selected mainly for their biographical significance, it may be well to glance at them again collectively with a view to a more distinct estimate of their purely literary merits.

About one half of the total aggregate of those miscellaneous scribblings of Chatterton in the ordinary English of his own day consists of

metrical satires. There are in all about sixteen pieces of this sort, longer or shorter. Six of the shorter pieces are in Hudibrastic or octosyllabic couplets; one, a longish anti-Puritanic ode, in the guise of a profane description of Whitefield's pulpit oratory and its effects on his groaning congregation, is in burlesque Pindarics or complex rhyming stanzas; but the rest are all in the regular heroic or decasyllabic rhyming couplets used so largely for all purposes by the English poets of the eighteenth century, and the all but established form of verse for English satire before and ever since. The most important of Chatterton's satirical pieces in this kind of verse are the four entitled respectively *Kew Gardens*, *Epistle to the Rev. Mr. Catcott*, *The Consuliad*, and *Resignation*. These may now be described a little more particularly:—

*Kew Gardens.* This is the largest of all Chatterton's acknowledged poems, and consists of about eleven hundred lines. The title indicates, at least in part, the purport of the satire. Kew Gardens (in Surrey, six miles west from London) had been the country residence of Frederick, Prince of Wales, eldest son of George II.; and, after his death in 1751, his widow, Augusta, had continued to reside there as Princess-Dowager of Wales, exerting thence that extraordinary influence on British party-politics with which, in conjunction with her favourite and chief adviser, John Stuart, third Earl of Bute, she was credited, or discredited,

through the rest of her life. The influence—already considerable through the last years of the reign of George II., when her son was growing up as heir-apparent to the throne under her guardianship and that of Bute as chief officer of her household—had been more apparent since October 1760, when her son, then two-and-twenty years of age, ascended the throne as George III. Bute, under whose supervision the young king had hitherto been wholly trained and educated, became at once a member of the Privy Council; in March 1761 he was appointed to one of the principal Secretaryships of State; in the following October the great Whig Administration of Pitt, which had been in office since 1757 with such splendid consequences for the British Empire, and which Bute had been gradually undermining, was virtually shattered by the resignation of Pitt himself; and in May 1762, the last fragments of that Administration having disappeared, Toryism came into the ascendant and a Tory Ministry was formed with Bute for its Premier. This actual Premiership of Bute lasted, indeed, only till April 1763, when he resigned, and went professedly into retirement. In the public opinion of the day, however, the retirement was nominal only; and through all the varying phases of British party-politics in the course of the next seven years, —the ministry of Mr. George Grenville from 1763 to 1765, the short Premiership of the Marquis of Rockingham from 1765 to 1766, the second Administration of Pitt from 1766 to 1768 under his new peerage title of Earl of Chatham, and the ministry of the Duke of Grafton from 1768 to 1770,—Bute was reputed to be still secretly the minister-paramount, and he and the King's mother were thought of as the malignant twin-spirits who were always consulting with each other in the background, infusing Tory obstinacy into the King's mind, and thwarting every proposed popular measure, and every reappearance of

Whig policy. Hence the peculiar significance of the phrase 'Kew Gardens' in the newspaper slang of the time. Was it not there that the two malignant spirits held their consultations and concocted their intrigues? This notion, wafted from London to Bristol, had suggested to the attorney's apprentice of Bristol the title for his intended satire. In so far as the satire is an effusion of his crude Wilkesite politics, it answers to the title well enough. The current scurrilities against Bute and the Princess-Dowager are duly reproduced, with random slashes at their Tory associates, and at Dr. Johnson and other writers on the Tory side, and with occasional laudations of Lord Chatham, qualified by regret that the great Commoner should have disgraced himself at last by becoming a peer. But, though there is a straggling of matter of this kind through the satire, there is much besides. Once Chatterton had begun the poem, he seems to have stuffed into it whatever came into his head; and, as Bristol and his own circumstances in Bristol were much in his head, a large proportion of the poem is occupied with that subject. It is in this poem, in fact, that he breaks out into those irreverent descriptions of Bristol society generally, and those lampoons upon the Mayor and Aldermen of Bristol, and upon Burgum, the Catcotts, Bishop Newton, Dr. Cutts Barton, the organist Broderip, and other particular persons in Bristol, of which we have already had to take account (*ante*, pp. 30-40). Worth quoting here as an additional sample is the following passage respecting himself and the very equivocal reputation he knew he had earned for himself in Bristol:—

> '"I must confess," exclaims a prudent sage,
> "You're really something clever for your age;
> Your lines have sentiment, and now and then
> A dash of satire stumbles from your pen;
> But, ah! that satire is a dangerous thing,

And often wounds the writer with its sting;
Your infant muse must sport with other toys;
Men will not bear the ridicule of boys. . . .
Besides, the town (a sober, honest town
Which smiles on virtue and gives vice a frown)
Bids censure brand with infamy your name:
I, even I, must think you are to blame. . . .
Then your religion! Ah, beware, beware!
Although a Deist is no monster here,
Yet hide your tenets: priests are powerful foes,
And priesthood fetters justice by the nose.
Think not the merit of a jingling song
Can countenance the writer's acting wrong;
Reform your manners, and with solemn air
Hear Catcott pray, and Robins squeak in prayer."'

The Satire, thus describable on the whole as an incoherent jumble of Wilkesite politics with local Bristol personalities, had been probably begun in 1769, and was certainly completed, and probably known in Bristol, if only by excerpts from it already in circulation, before April 1770, when it was mentioned ironically by Chatterton in his mock will announcing his intention of suicide (*ante*, p. 84). He seems to have taken it with him to London, and to have thought of the possibility of throwing portions of it into a form suitable for metropolitan publication; for among his still extant manuscript remains is one which, though looking like an independent satire, turns out, on examination, to be but a slightly modified transcript of the latter half of his *Kew Gardens*, provided with a more atrociously offensive title pointing the invective more directly at the King's Mother, Bute, and their Tory dependents. We may add that *Kew Gardens*, of which only fragments were accessible to Southey and Cottle in 1803, was first printed entire in 1837.

*Epistle to the Rev. Mr. Catcott.* This piece, dated 6th December 1769, consists of about three hundred lines. It

is nominally an address to the Rev. Alexander Catcott of Bristol on the subject of his book entitled *Treatise on the Deluge and Structure of the Earth*, the first edition of which had appeared in 1761, and a second and enlarged edition in 1768. Remonstrating with that gentleman very sharply, but not altogether disrespectfully, on the orthodoxy of his religious views, it is in the main an out-and-out proclamation of Chatterton's own free-thinking opinions, with an assault upon the church, the clergy, and priestcraft universally. It was first published complete from the manuscript in 1784.

*The Consuliad.* This is the amended form of a political satire, the first draught of which, written in October 1769, and now in the British Museum, had been entitled *The Constabiliad.* It consists of about two hundred and fifty lines, and is a description in mock-heroics of a free fight among the guests at a political dinner held

> 'Where Campbell's chimneys overlook the square,
> And Newton's future prospects hang in air.'

This seems to localise the affair at Bristol; but, as none of the editors of Chatterton give any information on the point, we are left to gather what we can from the poem itself. It tells us how, as the dinner was proceeding and the company round the table were busily eating and drinking, two of the chiefs, called Madoc and Twitcher, quarrelled over a toast: how Madoc threw a pigeon at Twitcher's head, and Twitcher retaliated by heaving a loin of veal right against Madoc's chest; how the fight then became general, viands and bottles flying, and speaker after speaker trying in vain to be heard, till at last the uproar was stilled and order restored by the sage advice of Tyro, a venerable lawyer. All this would be mere meaningless confusion for us now, were it not that Twitcher, who is the central figure of the satire throughout, can be identified. He was

John Montagu, fourth Earl of Sandwich, who had once been an intimate friend of Wilkes, and an associate of his in the notorious Medmenham Club of Free-thinkers, but had turned against that popular favourite, and was now a prominent member of the Grafton ministry. At a performance of the *Beggars' Opera* in one of the London theatres, no sooner had the actor spoken the hero's words in the last scene, 'That Jemmy Twitcher should peach me, I own surprises me,' than the audience had caught them up and cleverly applied them to the detested minister who had betrayed Wilkes; and from that day Lord Sandwich had been 'Jemmy Twitcher' for all England. Hence his appearance in Chatterton's piece as—

> 'Twitcher, a rotten branch of mighty stock,
> Whose interest winds his conscience as his clock;
> Whose attributes detestable have long
> Been evident, and infamous in song.'

But, as the satire was meant for an onslaught on the Grafton ministry generally, Grafton himself comes in, thus:—

> 'Grafton, to whose immortal sense we owe
> The blood which will from civil discord flow;
> Who swells each grievance, lengthens every tax,
> Blind to the ripening vengeance of the axe.'

In short, the poem, however hazy in its details to our apprehension now, was a truculent enough bit of party satire at the time, and must have been then generally or locally intelligible. At all events, Chatterton having sent it from Bristol to London some time late in 1769, it was thought worthy of publication, as we have seen (*ante* p. 119), in the *Freeholder's Magazine* for January 1770; and it was the piece for which Chatterton, when he came to London

himself, received half-a-guinea from Mr. Fell. It was republished in its present form in 1778.

*Resignation:* This, consisting of about eight hundred lines, is the longest of all Chatterton's satires, except his *Kew Gardens.* The incident which suggested its title, and which gives the keynote to the piece throughout, was the resignation of the Duke of Grafton on the 28th of January 1770, with the consequent accession of Lord North to the Premiership. Chatterton's first effort to connect himself with the London newspaper press, it may be remembered, had been by that stinging anonymous letter to the Duke of Grafton, commenting on his resignation, which had been sent from Bristol on the 16th of February 1770, and which appeared in the columns of the *Middlesex Journal* on the 24th of the same month (*ante* pp. 79-80). Evidently, however, the incident had suggested to Chatterton the idea of something more extensive and elaborate than a mere newspaper letter in imitation of Junius, and the present piece was the result. It is a metrical satire in review of the state of recent British politics, with invectives about equally distributed between Grafton as the outgoing Minister and North as his successor, but with straggling invectives besides against other politicians, praises of Wilkes, a denunciation of the rupture with the American Colonies, etc., all permeated and made coherent by continual references to Lord Bute and the King's Mother as the central powers of all the mischief. It closes with a call to Lord North to emulate his predecessor by resigning as soon as possible:—

> 'Yet, yet reflect, thou despicable thing,
> How wavering is the favour of a king;
> Think, since that feeble fence and Bute is all,
> How soon thy humbug farce of State may fall;
> Then catch the present moment while 'tis thine,
> Implore a noble pension, and resign.'

Lord North did not take the advice, but was to remain in office till 1782, twelve years after this unknown juvenile assailant of his was vituperating him in Bristol.—The piece, which is the most carefully written of all Chatterton's political satires, seems to have been brought by him to London as part of his stock, and may even have been finished there; for a considerable portion of it, as has been mentioned (*ante* p. 201), appeared in the *Freeholder's Magazine* for May 1770 with the intimation 'To be continued' annexed by the editor. This interesting fact, which had escaped previous editors of Chatterton, was first made public in 1875 in a note by Mr. Edward Bell in the new Aldine Edition of Chatterton's Poems, where Mr. Bell also certifies that the promised continuation is not found in any succeeding number of the magazine as far at least as to that for August 1770, with which the periodical seems to have come to a stop altogether. That it had been in a shaky condition even before the appearance of the May number we have already seen (*ante* p. 162). Mr. Fell, the editor, was then in King's Bench Prison; but Chatterton anticipated that this would be to his advantage rather than the reverse, as Mr. Fell's successors in the editorship knew nothing of Mr. Fell's arrangements and would be glad to engage him on his own terms. This might leave it doubtful whether it was Mr. Fell or his successors that had accepted the satire for publication in the *Freeholder*; but the probability is that it was Fell before his imprisonment. It was he that had accepted *The Consuliad* for the preceding January number and paid Chatterton half-a-guinea for it; and we have no other means of accounting for the second half-guinea noted by Chatterton (*ante* p. 212) as having been received by him from Mr. Fell than by supposing that it was in payment for the first portion of *Resignation* as accepted for the May number. Mr. Fell's successors do not seem to have cared

to complete the thing; and it was not till 1803 that *Resignation* was printed entire.

While this account of the most important of Chatterton's remains in the form of metrical satire on the public men and the current events of his time may give a more distinct conception of the ardour with which the young provincial had flung himself into that turbulent species of literature, it may also verify the estimate already offered of the amount of his success in the too tempting element. Following Churchill as his master in the scurrilous vein, and adopting the heroic couplet as the established vehicle for scurrilities of any sort, he had certainly learnt, as we have already said, to manage that vehicle very deftly, and sometimes with lines of epigrammatic effect reminding one of Churchill or even of Pope. When this is repeated, however, it is about all that can be said; for it cannot be added that the literary quality of the satires generally is such as to place them among, or even beside, those English satires of the greater masters that have been saved by the antiseptic power of this quality from the ephemeral fate of their subjects, and kept on the shelf of what is permanently readable in the language. Not one of Chatterton's satires, except

for the fact that it is Chatterton's, would now be readable as a whole; nor, though telling lines and couplets might be quoted from them here and there, would it be easy to produce from any one of them a really readable passage of any considerable length. Perhaps the nearest approach to such a passage is an imaginary sketch of the antecedents of Lord Bute introduced into the satire called *Resignation*. It is, it will be perceived, a purely imaginary sketch, betraying ludicrous ignorance of the real facts of that much abused nobleman's life; but, such as it is, it may be taken as a specimen of Chatterton at his best in political satire:—

'Far in the North, amidst whose dreary hills
None hear the pleasant murmuring of rills,
Where no soft gale in dying raptures blows,
Or aught which bears the look of verdure grows,
Save where the north wind cuts the solemn yew,
And russet rushes drink the noxious dew,—
Dank exhalations drawn from stagnant moors,
The morning dress of Caledonia's shores,—
Upon a bleak and solitary plain,
Exposed to every storm of wind and rain,
A humble cottage reared its lonely head,
Its roof with matted reeds and rushes spread:
The walls were osiers daubed with slimy clay,
One narrow entrance opened to the day.
Here lived a Laird, the ruler of his clan,
Whose fame through every northern mountain ran:
Great was his learning, for he long had been
A student at the town of Aberdeen.
Professor of all languages at once,

To him some reckoned Chapelow a dunce.
With happy fluency he learnt to speak
Syriac or Latin, Arabic or Greek ;
Not any tongue in which Oxonians sing
When they rejoice or blubber with the King
To him appeared unknown. With sapient look
He taught the Highland meaning of each book
But often, when to pastimes he inclined,
To give some relaxation to his mind
He laid his books aside, forgot to read
To hunt wild goslings down the river Tweed,
To chase a starving weasel from her bed,
And wear the spoil triumphant on his head.
'Tis true his rent-roll just maintained his state
But some in spite of poverty are great ;
Though Famine sunk her impress on his face,
Still you might there his haughty temper trace.
Descended from a catalogue of kings,
Whose warlike arts Macpherson sweetly sings,
He bore the majesty of monarchs past
Like a tall pine rent with the winter's blast . . .
Fired by ambition, he resolved to roam
Far from the famine of his native home
To seek the warmer climate of the South,
And at one banquet feast his eyes and mouth.
In vain the amorous Highland lass complained ;
The son of monarchs would not be restrained ;
Clad in his native many-coloured suit,
Forth struts the walking majesty of Bute.
His spacious sword, to a large wallet strung,
Across his broad capacious shoulders hung.
As from the hills the land of promise rose,
A secret transport in his bosom glows ;
A joy prophetic, until then unknown,
Assured him all he viewed would be his own.
New scenes of pleasure recreate his sight ;
He views the fertile meadows with delight ;
Still in soliloquy he praised the view,
Nor was more pleased with future scenes at Kew.

His wonder broke in murmurs from his tongue;
No more the praise of Highland hills he sung,
Till now a stranger to the cheerful green
Where springing flowers diversify the scene.
The lofty elm, the oak of lordly look,
The willow shadowing the bubbling brook,
The hedges blooming with the sweets of May,
With double pleasure marked his gladsome way.
Having through varying rural prospects passed,
He reached the great metropolis at last. . . .
A lengthening train of boys displayed him great;
He seemed already Minister of State:
The Carlton Sibyl saw his graceful mien,
And straight forgot her hopes of being Queen.
She sighed, she wished; the virtuous Chudleigh flew
To bring the Caledonian swain to Kew . . .
Resolved to make him greatest of the great,
She led him to her hidden cave of state;
There spurs and coronets were placed around,
And privy seals were scattered on the ground;
Here piles of honorary truncheons lay,
And gleaming stars made artificial day;
With mystic rods whose magic power is such
They metamorphose parties with a touch . . .
"These," said the Sibyl, "from this present hour
Are thine, with every dignity of power.
No statesman shall be titularly great,
None shall obtain an office in the State,
But such whose principles and manners suit
The virtuous temper of the Earl of Bute;
All shall preserve thy interest; none shall guide
But such as you repute are qualified.
No more on Scotland's melancholy plain
Your starving countrymen shall drink the rain,
But, hither hasting on their naked feet,
Procure a place, forget themselves, and eat."'

The satires deducted, and also the lyrical Burletta

(which has been already sufficiently described, *ante* pp. 209-212), the residue of the Acknowledged Poems consists of a small miscellany of short pieces called variously *Elegies*, *African Eclogues*, *Songs*, *Fragments*, etc. In some of these the poetic quality is decidedly higher and finer than in the satires or the Burletta. Take, for example, the following 'Elegy,' dated 'Bristol, Nov. 17, 1769,' and first printed in the *Town and Country Magazine* of that month :—

'Joyless I seek the solitary shade,
Where dusky Contemplation veils the scene—
The dark retreat, of leafless branches made,
Where sickening sorrow wets the yellowed green.

'The darksome ruins of some sacred cell,
Where erst the sons of Superstition trod,
Tottering upon the mossy meadow, tell
*We* better know, but less adore, our God.

'Now, as I mournful tread the gloomy nave,
Through the wide window, once with mysteries dight,
The distant forest and the darkened wave
Of the swoln Avon ravishes my sight.

'But see! the thickening veil of Evening's drawn;
The azure changes to a sable blue;
The rapturing prospects fly the lessening lawn,
And Nature seems to mourn the dying view.

'Self-sprighted Fear creeps silent through the gloom,
Starts at the rustling leaf and rolls his eyes;
Aghast with horror, when he views the tomb,
With every torment of a hell he flies.

'The bubbling brooks in plaintive murmurs roll;
The bird of omen, with incessant scream,
To melancholy thoughts awakes the soul,
And lulls the mind to Contemplation's dream.

'A dreary stillness broods o'er all the vale;
The clouded moon emits a feeble glare;
Joyless I seek the darkling hill and dale:
Where'er I wander, sorrow still is there.'

This is not perfect, but it is in a vein of true poetry; and both the melancholy of the mood, and the tendency to personification, as in 'Self-sprighted Fear,' are very characteristic of Chatterton. The following, also a fine instance of personification, is from another 'Elegy,' of about the same date, which contains many good stanzas—

'Pale, rugged Winter, bending o'er his tread,
His grizzled hair bedropt with icy dew;
His eyes a dusky light congealed and dead;
His robe a tinge of bright ethereal blue!

'His train a motleyed, sanguine, sable cloud,
He limps along the russet dreary moor,
While rising whirlwinds, blasting keen and loud,
Roll the white surges to the sounding shore.'

For an adequate idea, however, of the poetical genius of 'the marvellous boy,' we must pass from his Acknowledged Poems in the ordinary English of his time to those strange Antiques in a factitious kind of Early English which he put forth as recovered relics of Rowley and other poets of the

fifteenth century. Whether, in the composition of those poems, it was Chatterton's habit first to write in ordinary phraseology, and then, by the help of glossaries, to translate what he had written into archaic language, or whether he had by practice become so far master of ancient words and expressions as to be able to write directly in the factitious dialect he had prescribed for himself, certain it is that, whenever his thoughts and fancies attained their highest level, he either was whirled into the archaic form by an irresistible instinct, or deliberately adopted it. Up to a certain point, as it were, Chatterton could remain himself; but the moment he was hurried past that point, the moment he attained to a certain degree of sublimity, or fervour, or solemnity in his conceptions, and was constrained to continue at the same pitch, at that moment he reverted to the fifteenth century, and passed into the soul of Rowley, or of one of Rowley's imagined contemporaries. No one who has not read the Antique Poems of Chatterton can imagine what extraordinary things they are. Feeling this, and feeling also that all that we have said about Chatterton hitherto would be out of proportion unless we could communicate some idea of the force of his genius as shown in those Antiques, we

shall close this biography with a further account of them and a few specimen extracts.[1]

The Antique Poems, as printed in Southey's edition of Chatterton's Works in 1803, occupy one octavo volume out of three. The following is a descriptive list of the most important of them—

1. *Four Eclogues*, or supposed poetical dialogues of shepherds and shepherdesses at different periods in the history of England, from the Crusades to the Wars of the Roses. The first three of the Eclogues were printed from MSS. in Chatterton's writing in the possession of Mr. Catcott, to whom they had been given as transcripts of old poems by Rowley; the fourth was published in the *Town and Country Magazine* for May, 1769, with this title, 'Elinoure and Juga: written three hundred years ago by T. Rowley, secular priest.' It describes two maidens lamenting the absence of their knights in the wars, and dying when they hear that their knights are slain.

[1] Nowhere now, I suppose, is there any lingering shred of belief in a possible authentic original in any shape whatever for the so-called Rowley Poems. Should any one, however, be still so far interested in that once fierce literary controversy as to desire to see a marshalling of the linguistic arguments by which the old delusion is finally quashed, he may be referred to Professor Skeat's Essay on the subject contained in the new Aldine Edition of Chatterton's Works, published in 1875. It is there shown that only by the most deplorable ignorance of the history of the English Language could the Rowley Poems have ever been accepted as genuine specimens of Fifteenth Century English, or of the English of any other century, or as anything else than a pseudo-archaic English invented by Chatterton himself out of some acquaintance with Speght's *Chaucer*, aided by a glossary of old words which he had drawn up from one or two easily accessible vocabularies, sometimes mistaking the meanings of particular words there cited, and at other times forcing words, for the purposes of metre and rhyme, into fantastic forms unknown to Old English grammar.

2. *The Parliament of Sprytes:* 'A most merrie Entyrlude, plaied by the Carmelyte Freeres, at Mastre Canynges hys greete howse, before Mastre Canynges and Byshoppe Carpenterre, on dedicatynge the Chyrche of Oure Ladie of Redclefte; wroten bie T. Rowleie and J. Iscamme.' First printed in Barrett's *History of Bristol*: the original, in Chatterton's handwriting, in the British Museum.

3. *The Tournament:* A dramatic account by Rowley of a Tournament held at Bristol before Edward I. in 1285, in which Sir Simon Burton, one of the old worthies of Bristol, and the original founder of the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe which Canynge rebuilt, showed his prowess over all other knights. Printed from a copy made by Catcott from one in Chatterton's handwriting.

4. *The Bristowe Tragedie; or the Dethe of Syr Charles Bawdin:* A ballad, in nearly a hundred stanzas, celebrating the death of Sir Charles Baldwin, otherwise Sir Baldwin Fulford, a zealous Lancastrian, who was executed at Bristol, in 1461, by order of Edward IV. The poem was printed in London, in 1772, from a copy made by Catcott from one in Chatterton's handwriting. Chatterton, it appears, acknowledged to his mother and sister that he was the author of this poem; and it is in a less archaic style than the others.

5. *The Storie of William Canynge:* A poem in twenty-five stanzas, purporting to be extracted from a prose work by Rowley giving an account of eminent natives of Bristol from the earliest times to his own. The first thirty-four lines of this poem are extant on the 'original vellum' given by Chatterton to Mr. Barrett; the rest is from various transcripts.

6. *Songe to Ælla, Lorde of the Castel of Brystowe ynne daies of yore:* A short Pindaric lyric by Rowley to the memory of Ælla, the great Saxon chieftain of West England,

and enemy of the Danes, in the tenth century. Printed from the Catcott MSS.

7. *Ælla:* 'A Tragycal Enterlude, or Discoorseynge Tragedie, wrotenn by Thomas Rowleie; plaiedd before Mastre Canynge, atte hys howse nempte the Rodde Lodge, alsoe before the Duke of Norfolck, Johan Howard.'—This is Chatterton's masterpiece. It is a long dramatic poem in various rhyme, with songs interspersed, originally printed from a manuscript in Chatterton's hand in the possession of Mr. Catcott. The hero of the drama is the aforesaid Ælla, the Saxon lord of Bristol in the tenth century, and the hammer of the then invading Danes. The plot is as follows: —Ælla has just married the beauteous Birtha, and is feasting at Bristol in all the joy of his spousals, when the news is brought that two hosts of the Danes, under Magnus and Hurra, are ravaging the country round. Ælla tears himself away from Birtha; meets the Danes; totally defeats Magnus and *his* host; and drives Hurra and *his* host skulking into the woods. He is in the pride of his victory when his friend Celmonde, who has been secretly in love with Birtha, steals from the camp, and, going to Bristol alone, tells Birtha that her husband is sorely wounded, and wishes her to come to him. Birtha mounts a horse immediately, and, not waiting to inform her maidens of her purpose, rides off with Celmonde. They go through a wood; where, as Celmonde is revealing his purpose and offering violence, Hurra and his Danes come to the rescue, slay him, and magnanimously protect Birtha. They escort her to Bristol; where meanwhile, however, Ælla has arrived, and, thinking his Birtha false, has stabbed himself. He survives to see her, and then dies; and she swoons on his body.—In the supposed performance of the Tragedy in the house of Master Canynge in Bristol the part of Ælla is represented as having been taken by

Rowley himself, that of Celmonde by John Iscam, that of Hurra by Sir Tibbot Gorges, and that of Birtha by Master Edward Canynge, the subordinate parts by others.

8. *Goddwynn:* 'A Tragedie, by Thomas Rowleie.' This poem, also from the Catcott MSS., is a fragment of a supposed tragedy, the scene of which is laid in England immediately before the Norman Conquest, and the chief persons in which are Earl Godwin, Harold, and King Edward the Confessor. The topic of the drama, so far as it proceeds, is the patriotic rage of the Saxons at the growing power of the Normans in the land. Though only a portion of the drama is given, the figment is that it was performed entire, the part of Harold taken by Rowley, that of Godwin by John Iscam, that of Edward by Sir Tibbot Gorges, that of Alstan by Sir Alan de Vere, and that of King Edward by Master William Canynge.

9. *The Balade of Charitie:* 'As wroten bie the gode prieste Thomas Rowleie, 1464.' This poem, it has been ascertained, was sent by Chatterton to the *Town and Country Magazine*, with a note to the editor, signed 'D. B.' and dated 'July 4, 1770,' as follows—'Sir, if the glossary annexed to the following piece will make the language intelligible, the sentiment, description, and versification are highly deserving the attention of the literati.' This commendation notwithstanding, the poem seems to have been rejected. That may have been a disappointment to Chatterton; for one infers that the piece may have been written, or finally touched up, in London, when his other magazine contributions were failing, and he thought of making a new and more definite experiment there with his Antiques (see *ante* pp. 215-216). It may have been for the purpose of this very piece, indeed, that he had sent to Bristol for his glossary of antique terms. At all events, the piece is one of the latest written of the Antiques.

10. *The Battle of Hastings:* A long rhymed description,

in two distinct versions, of supposed incidents in the great battle by which Duke William became master of England. The poem purported to be a translation by Rowley of a metrical narrative by Turgot, a Saxon monk, contemporary with the Conquest.

These Antique Poems of Chatterton (and there are about twenty shorter pieces in the series, some of them mere morsels) are perhaps as worthy of being still read as many portions of the poetry of Byron, Shelley, or Keats. There are, at least, passages in them quite equal to any to be found in those poets; and it is only the uncouth and spurious appearance of antiquity they wear when the absurd spelling in which they were first printed is retained that prevents them from being known and quoted. In the specimens now to be given we shall remove that concealment so far as may be possible with due retention of every jot and tittle of the assumed archaism of the language. Chatterton's archaisms, whether of vocabulary or of grammar, pseudo-archaisms though they were, belonged to his very mood when he wrote the poems, and swayed his imagination in the production of them; they are essential, therefore, to the proper effect of the poems now; and no editor has a right to tamper with them any more than with the substance of the text, or with that artificial archaism of Spenser's

language which was part of *his* device for distancing himself from the world of the present, and carrying his readers back with him into an imaginary world of the Arthurian past. Let it be understood, therefore, that in the following extracts nothing of the archaic is removed except what is archaic for the eye only—*i.e.*, so much of the troublesome old spelling as is wholly meaningless for the ear—and that, if the extracts are read aloud as they are here presented, they will be read just as Chatterton himself must have read them. The archaic words as they are encountered may be pronounced in mere faith or guess at first; and there may be reference afterwards to the footnotes for their certain or probable meanings.

Here is the *Balade of Charitie* entire:—

'In Virginè the sweltry sun gan sheene
And hot upon the mees[1] did cast his ray;
The apple rudded from its paly green,
And the moll[2] pear did bend his leafy spray;
The peed chelandrie[3] sung the livelong day;
Twas now the pride, the manhood of the year,
And eke the ground was dight in its most deft aumere.[4]

'The sun was gleaming in the mid of day,
Dead still the air, and eke the welkin blue,
When from the sea arist in drear array
A heap of clouds of sable sullen hue;

[1] Meads. [2] Soft. [3] Pied goldfinch. [4] Becoming mantle.

The which full fast into the woodland drew,
Hiltring atenes [1] the sunne's fetive face ;
And the black tempest swoln and gathered up apace.

'Beneath an holm, fast by a pathway side,
Which did unto Saint Godwin's convent lead,
A hapless pilgrim moaning did abide,
Poor in the view, ungentle in his weed,
Long bretful [2] of the miseries of need.
Where from the hailstones could the almer fly ?
He had no housen there, ne any convent nigh !

'Look in his gloomèd [3] face, his spright there scan :
How woe-begone, how withered, forwend,[4] dead !
Haste to thy church-glebe-house, [5] ashrewed man ! [6]
Haste to thy kist, [7] thy only dortour-bed : [8]
Cale [9] as the clay which will gré [10] on thy head
Is charity and love among high elves :
Knightès and barons live for pleasure and themselves.

'The gathered storm is ripe : the big drops fall ;
The forswat meadows smeethe[11] and drench with rain ;
The coming ghastness does the cattle pall ;
And the full flocks are driving o'er the plain ;
Dashed from the clouds the waters float again ;
The welkin opes ; the yellow levin flies ;
And the hot fiery smoth in the wide lowings dies. [12]

'List ! how the thunder's rattling climming [13] sound
Cheeves slowly on, and then embollen clangs, [14]
Shakes the high spire, and, lost, dispended, drowned,
Still on the galliard ear of terror hangs.[15]
The winds are up ; the lofty elmen swangs ;
Again the levin and the thunder pours,
And the full clouds are burst attenes in stonen showers.

[1] Shrouding at once. [2] Brimful. [3] Clouded.
[4] Sapless. [5] To thy grave. [6] Accursed man.
[7] Coffin. [8] Dormitory. [9] Cold. [10] Grow.
[11] Sweated meadows smoke. [12] Fiery steam : wide flamings.
[13] Noisy. [14] Moves slowly : swollen clangs. [15] Frighted ear.

'Spurring his palfrey o'er the watery plain,
The Abbot of Saint Godwin's convent came;
His chapournet[1] was drented[2] with the rain,
And his penct[3] girdle met with mickle shame;
He ainward[4] told his bead-roll at the same.
The storm increasen, and he drew aside,
With the mist[5] alms-craver near to the holm to bide.

'His cope[6] was all of Lincoln cloth so fine,
With a gold button fastened near his chin;
His autremete[7] was edged with golden twine,
And his shoon-pike[8] a loverd's[9] might have bin,
Full well it shewn he thoughten cost no sin;
The trammels of his palfrey pleased his sight,
For the horse-milliner his head with roses dight.

'"An alms, Sir Priest!" the dropping pilgrim said,
"O let me wait within your convent-door,
Till the sun shineth high above our head,
And the loud tempest of the air is o'er.
Helpless and old am I, alas! and poor;
No home, ne friend, ne money in my pouch;
All that I call my own is this my silver crouch."[10]

'"Varlet," replied the Abbot, "cease your din;
This is no season alms and prayers to give;
My porter never lets a faitour[11] in;
None touch my ring who not in honour live."
And, now the sun with the black clouds did strive,
And shetting[12] on the ground his glary ray,
The Abbot spurred his steed and eftsoons rode away.

'Once more the sky was black, the thunder rolled;
Fast rinning o'er the plain a priest was seen,
Ne dight[13] full proud, ne buttoned up in gold;

---

[1] Round hat. [2] Drenched. [3] Painted.
[4] Backwards, the wrong way, in token of anger. [5] Wretched.
[6] Cloak. [7] Under-vestment. [8] Shoe-peaks. [9] A lord's.
[10] Used for *cross* or *crucifix* by stress of rhyme. [11] A vagabond
[12] Shooting. [13] Dressed.

His cope[1] and jape[2] were gray, and eke were clean ;
A limitour[3] he was of order mean ;
And from the pathway-side then turnèd he,
Where the poor almer lay beneath the holmen tree.

'"An alms, Sir Priest," the dropping pilgrim said,
"For sweet Saint Mary and your order's sake."
The limitour then loosened his pouch-thread,
And did thereout a groat of silver take.
The mister[4] pilgrim did for hallin[5] shake :
"Here, take this silver, it may eathe[6] thy care ;
We are God's stewards all, neete[7] of our own we bear.

'"But ah ! unhaily[8] pilgrim, learn of me,
Scathe any give a rent-roll to their Lord.
Here take my semicope[9] ; thou art bare, I see ;
'Tis thine ; the saints will give me my reward."
He left the pilgrim, and his way abord.[10]
Virgin and holy Saints who sit in gloure,[11]
Or give the mighty will, or give the good man power !'

In the last two lines there is an example of a power of sententious and compact expression which is not infrequent in the Rowley Poems. Here are a few more samples of the same—

'Plays made from halie tales I hold unmeet ;
Let some great story of a man be sung.'

'Verse may be good, but poetry wants more.'

'Strange doom it is that in these days of ours
Nought but a bare recital can have place :
Now shapely Poesy hath lost its powers,
And pinant[12] History is only grace.'

---

[1] Cloak. [2] Surplice. [3] Begging Friar. [4] Wretched.
[5] Joy. [6] Ease. [7] Naught. [8] Unhappy.
[9] Short under-cloak. [10] Went on. [11] Glory. [12] Languid History.

'But then renown eterne!—It is but air
Bred in the phantasie, and allene living there.'

'Still murmuring at their schap,[1] still to the king
They roll their troubles like a surgy sea.
Han England, then, a tongue, but not a sting?
Doth all complain, yet none will righted be?'

'And both together sought the unknown shore,
Where we shall go, where many's gone before.'

'So have I seen a mountain-oak, that long
Has cast his shadow to the mountain side,
Brave all the winds, though ever they so strong,
And view the briars below with self-taught pride;
But, when thrown down by mighty thunder-stroke,
He'd rather be a briar than an oak.'

The following is a personification almost worthy of Spenser—

'Hope, holy sister, sweeping through the sky,
In crown of gold and robe of lily white,
Which far abroad in gentle air doth fly,
Meeting from distance the enjoyous sight;
Albeit oft thou takest thy high flight
Heckèd in mist,[2] and with thine eyne yblent.[3]'

Here are the opening stanzas of the second draft of *The Battle of Hastings*. They describe the imagined first incidents of the battle, and are quoted as exemplifying Chatterton's use of a peculiar ten-lined stanza of which he was very fond, and which seems to have been of his own invention:—

[1] Fate. [2] Shrouded in mist. [3] Eyes blinded.

'Oh Truth! immortal daughter of the skies,
Too little known to writers of these days,
Teach me, fair Sanct, thy passing worth to prize,
To blame a friend, and give a foeman praise.
The fickle moon, bedecked with silver rays,
Leading a train of stars of feeble light,
With look adigne[1] the world below surveys,
The world that wotted not it could be night.
With armour dight, with human gore y-dyed,
She sees King Harold stand, fair England's curse and pride.

'With ale and vernage[2] drunk, his soldiers lay;
Here was an hind anigh an earl y-spread,
And keeping of their leader's natal day,
This even in drink, to-morrow with the dead!
Through every troop disorder reared her head;
Dancing and heydeigns[3] was the only theme:
Sad doom was theirs, who left this easy bed,
And waked to torments from so sweet a dream.
Duke William's men, of coming death afraid,
All night to the great God for succour asked and prayed.

'Thus Harold to his wights that stood around:
"Go, Gurth and Edward, take bills half-a-score,
And search how far our foeman's camp doth bound.
Yourself have rede; I need to say no more.
My brother, best beloved of any ore,[4]
My Leofwinus, go to every wight;
Tell them to range the battle to the grore,[5]
And waiten till I send the hest[6] for fight."
He said: the loyal brothers left the place,
Success and cheerfulness depicted on each face.

'Slowly brave Gurth and Edward did advance,
And marked with care the army's distant side,
When the dire clattering of the shield and lance
Made them to be by Hugh Fitzhugh espied.
He lifted up his voice and loudly cried;

[1] Noble. [2] Sweet wine. [3] Some rustic sport.
[4] Other. [5] Intended meaning unknown. [6] Order.

Like wolves in winter did the Normans yell;
Gurth drew his sword, and cut his burlèd[1] hide;
The proto-slain[2] man of the field he fell;
Out-streamed the blood, and ran in smoking curls;
Reflected by the moon seemed rubies mixed with pearls.

'A troop of Normans from the mass-song came,
Roused from their prayers by the flotting[3] cry.
Though Gurth and Ailwardus perceived the same,
Not once they stood abashed or thought to fly:
He seized a bill, to conquer or to die.
Fierce as a clevis[4] from a rock y-torn,
That makes a valley wheresoe'er it lies,
Fierce as a river bursting from the bourne,[5]
So fiercely Gurth hit Fitz du Gore a blow,
And on the verdant plain he laid the champion low.

'Tankerville thus: "All peace in William's name!
Let none y-draw his arcublaster bow!"
Gurth cased his weapon as he heard the same,
And venging Normans stayed the flying floe.[6]
The sire went on: "Ye men, what mean ye so
Thus unprovoked to court a bloody fight?"
Quoth Gurth, "Our meaning we ne care to show,
Nor dread thy Duke with all his men of might;
Here, single only, these to all thy crew
Shall show what English hands and hearts can do."

'"Seek not for blood," Tankerville calm replied,
"Nor joy in death like madmen most distraught.
In peace and mercy is a Christian's pride;
He that doth contests prize is in a fault."[7]
And now the news was to Duke William brought
That men of Harold's army taken were.
For their good cheer all caties[8] were enthought,[9]

---

[1] Armed. [2] First slain. [3] Whistling.
[4] Cliff. [5] Bank or boundary. [6] Arrow.
[7] Generally pronounced *faut* in last century. [8] Cates, dainties.
[9] Thought of.

And Gurth and Edwardus enjoyed good cheer.
Quoth William, "Thus shall Williàm be found
A friend to every man that treads on English ground."'

In a different metre is a scrap of two stanzas entitled *Account of W. Canynge's Feast*, and purporting to have been composed by the great Bristol merchant himself. The piece of discoloured parchment on which it is inscribed in characters of red ink, and which Chatterton gave to Mr. Barrett as the original in Canynge's handwriting, is now among the Chatterton MSS. in the British Museum. Within the small space of two stanzas the coagulation of archaic words and of mistaken forms of old grammar is so dense as almost to defy easy interpretation of the piece at first sight; and the difficulty has been needlessly increased by the wretched punctuation of the piece hitherto in the printed copies. That fault amended, and the old spellings dropped where they imply nothing either in sense or in sound, but retained where they do imply anything, the piece stands thus :—

'Thorough the hall the bell han[1] sound;
Byelécoyle[2] do[3] the grave beseem;
The aldermen do sit around,
And snoffle up the cheortè[4] steam,
Like asses wild in desert waste
Swotely[5] the morning air do taste.

[1] Mistaken archaism for *hath*.
[2] Hospitable reception.
[3] Mistaken for *doth*.
[4] Savoury.
[5] Sweetly.

'Sic[1] keen they ate: the minstrels play;
The din of angels do they keep,
High style: the guests ha[2] né[3] to say,
But nod their thanks and fall asleep.
Thus eachone day be I to deene,[4]
Gif Rowley, Iscam, or Tib Georges be ne[5] seen.'

This is still somewhat opaque; but it may be cleared by taking in the explanations from the footnotes, or better still by reading Professor Skeat's explanations in his luminous and interesting note on the piece. They are as follows:—

'It contains the word *han* for *hath*, a peculiarly 'Rowleian blunder, found in Rowley *passim*, but 'in no other writer; *han* is plural, and can only 'do duty for *have*. The same remark applies to '*ne*, which is common for *not* or *nought* in Rowley, 'but never means *naught* in Old English. Neither 'does it in Old English follow its verb. The 'words *byelecoyle* and *cheortè* are from Bailey '[Bailey's *Etymological English Dictionary*]. The 'former word is due to a singular mistake. It 'so happens that a personage named *Bialacoil* 'appears in the *Romaunte of the Rose*. This is 'bad spelling for the old French *bel-accuel*, i.e., fair 'reception. Hence *Bialacoil* has been rightly 'Englished in the glossaries by Fair-welcome or

[1] So. [2] Have. [3] Naught. [4] Dine. [5] Not.

'Fair-welcoming. Chatterton, not understanding 'this, has turned a proper substantive into a com-'mon adjective, as though he should say—the 'grave people appear hospitable. Otherwise, we 'must take it to mean—fair welcome doth befit 'grave men; only *do* never means *doth*.'—So enlightened, let the reader try the two stanzas again. Then all becomes plain and delightful. What do we see? We see Canynge in his dining-hall, entertaining his guests hospitably, as befits a grave and wealthy Bristol merchant. But the guests are only a few aldermen; and, as he looks at them seated round the table and snuffing up the savoury steam from the dishes before them, he compares them in his own mind to so many wild asses in the desert snuffing the sweet morning air. He is giving them the best of music, for the minstrels are playing in the hall during dinner, playing angelically and in their highest style; but it is all in vain. Not a word have his guests to say on that or on any other subject; they only nod their thanks and fall asleep. He thinks with himself what a dreary succession of dinners he has to look forward to if they are to be all like this, and if he cannot see one or other of his poetical friends, Rowley, Iscam, or Tibbot Gorges, again at his table; and he pens the

reflection for *their* benefit.—Could anything be cleverer?

Perhaps, however, it is in the lyrical pieces scattered through the Antique Poems that Chatterton's genius is seen at its best. Here is *Rowley's Song to Ælla*—

'Oh thou, or what remains of thee,
Ælla, the darling of futurity,
Let this my song bold as thy courage be,
As everlasting to posterity!
When Dacia's sons, with hairs of blood-red hue,
Like king-cups bursting with the morning dew,
Arranged in drear array,
Upon the lethal day,
Spread far and wide on Watchet's shore,
Then didst thou furious stand,
And by thy valiant hand
Besprengèd all the mees[1] with gore.

Drawn by thine anlace[2] fell
Down to the depths of hell
Thousands of Dacians went;
Bristowans, men of might,
Ydared the bloody fight,
And acted deeds full quaint.

'Oh thou, where'er (thy bones at rest)
Thy spirit to haunt delighteth best,
Whether upon the blood-imbruèd plain,
Or where thou kenst from far
The dismal cry of war,
Or seest some mountain made of corse of slain;
Or seest the hatchèd[3] steed
Yprancing on the mead,

[1] Meads. [2] Sword. [3] Accoutred.

And neigh to be among the pointed spears;
Or in black armour stalk around
Embattled Bristowe, once thy ground,
And glow ardúrous[1] on the castle stairs,
Or fiery round the minster glare:
Let Bristowe still be made thy care.
Guard it from foemen and consuming fire;
Like Avon's stream encirc it round;
Ne let a flame enharm the ground,
Till in one flame all the whole world expire.'

From this piece of powerful imagination turn to the following exquisitely dainty little song supposed to be sung for the entertainment of Birtha by one of Ælla's minstrels. The song, though introduced into *Ælla*, purports to be by Sir Tibbot Gorges, and not by Rowley—

'As Elinour by the green lessel[2] was sitting,
As from the sun's heatè she harried,
She said, as her white hands white hosen was knitting,
"What pleasure it is to be married!

"My husband, lord Thomas, a forester bold
As ever clove pin or the basket,[3]
Does no cherisaunces[4] from Elinour hold;
I have it as soon as I ask it.

'"When I lived with my father in merry Cloud-dell,
Though 'twas at my lief to mind spinning,
I still wanted something, but what ne could tell,
My lord-father's barbed[5] hall han ne winning.[6]

'"Each morning I rise do I set my maidens,
Some to spin, some to cardle, some bleaching;
Gif any new entered do ask for mine aidens,
Then swithen[7] you find me a-teaching.

[1] All blazing. [2] Arbour. [3] Marks in archery. [4] Comforts.
[5] Decorated. [6] Had no charms. [7] Straightway.

'"Lord Walter, my father, he lovèd me well,
And nothing unto me was needing;
But, should I again go to merry Cloud-dell,
In soothen 'twould be without reding."[1]

'She said; and lord Thomas came over the lea,
As he the fat deerkins was chasing;
She put by her knitting, and to him went she:
So we leave them both kindly embracing.'

The following, in another strain, is also one of the lyrics sung by the minstrels in *Ælla*. It is the song of a bereaved maiden—

'O, sing unto my roundelay;
O, drop the briny tear with me;
Daunce ne moe at halie-day;
Like a running river be.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

'Black his crine[2] as the winter-night,
White his rood[3] as the summer snow,
Rud his face as the morning light;
Cold he lies in the grave below.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

'Sweet his tongue as the throstle's note;
Quick in dance as thought can be;
Deft his tabour, cudgel stout;
O, he lies by the willow-tree.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

[1] Good advice. [2] Hair. [3] Neck.

'Hark! the raven flaps his wing
In the briared dell below;
Hark! the death-owl loud doth sing
To the nightmares as they go.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

'See! the white moon shines on high;
Whiter is my true love's shroud,
Whiter than the morning-sky,
Whiter than the evening-cloud.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

'Here upon my true love's grave
Shall the barren flowers be laid!
Ne one halie saint to save
All the celness[1] of a maid.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

'With my hands I'll dent[2] the briars
Round his halie corse to gree;
Ouphant,[3] fairy, light your fires;
Here my body still shall be.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

'Come with acorn-cup and thorn;
Drain my heartè's blood away;
Life and all its good I scorn,
Dance by night, or feast by day.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

[1] Coldness. [2] Fasten. [3] Elfin.

'Water witches, crowned with raits,[1]
Bear me to your lethal tide:
I die! I come! my true love waits.
—— Thus the damsel spake, and died.'

But perhaps the grandest thing in all Chatterton is his fragmentary Ode to Liberty in his *Tragedy of Godwin*. There is nothing nobler of its kind in the whole range of English poetry. A chorus is supposed to sing the song: which is throughout, it will be seen, a burst of glorious and sustained personification—

'When Freedom, drest in blood-stained vest,
To every knight her war-song sung,
Upon her head wild weeds were spread,
A gory anlace[2] by her hung.
She danced on the heath;
She heard the voice of Death;
Pale-eyed Affright, his heart of silver hue,
In vain assailed her bosom to acale.[3]
She heard onflemed[4] the shrieking voice of woe,
And sadness in the owlet shake the dale.
She shook the burlèd[5] spear;
On high she jeest[6] her shield;
Her foemen all appear,
And flizz along the field.
Power, with his heafod straught[7] into the skies,
His spear a sunbeam and his shield a star,
Alike tway brenning gronfires[8] rolls his eyes,
Chafts with his iron feet and sounds to war.
She sits upon a rock;
She bends before his spear;

[1] Rushes. [2] Sword. [3] Freeze. [4] Unterrified. [5] Pointed.
[6] Tossed. [7] Head stretched. [8] Two burning meteors.

She rises from the shock,
Wielding her own in air.
Hard as the thunder doth she drive it on ;
Wit skilly wimpled[1] guides it to his crown ;
His long sharp spear, his spreading shield, is gone ;
He falls, and falling rolleth thousands down.
War, gore-faced War, by envy burl'd,[2] arist,
His fiery helm nodding to the air,
Ten bloody arrows in his straining fist.'

. . . . . .

What a picture in the last line! With no other evidence before us than is afforded by this and by the other pieces that have been quoted, one may assert, unhesitatingly, not only that Chatterton was a true English poet of the eighteenth century, but also that, compared with the other British poets of the part of that century immediately prior to the new era begun by Burns and Wordsworth, he was, with all his immaturity, almost solitary in the possession of the highest poetic gift. Pope, Thomson, and Goldsmith, were poets of that period; and no sensible man will now think of comparing the boy of Bristol, in respect of his whole activity, with those established classics in our literature, or even with some of their minor contemporaries. But he had a more specific fire and force of imagination in him, a dash more of the mystic 'vision and faculty divine,' than is dis-

[1] Closely covered. [2] Armed.

cernible in any of them; and, when one remembers that he was but seventeen years and nine months old when he died, and that some of the best of his antiques were written fully a year before his death, little wonder that, with Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats, and with Rossetti still later, one looks back again and again on his brief existence with a kind of awe, as on the track of a heaven-shot meteor earthwards through a night of gloom.

THE END

Printed by T. and A. Constable, Printers to Her Majesty
at the Edinburgh University Press

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